

100 DAYS FOR CHANGE

BY TRACEY SPICER

Leonardo da Vinci once wrote about the “urgency of doing”.
“Knowing is not enough,” he said. “We must apply. Being willing is not enough; we must do.”

I’ve been reflecting on this quote over the past decade, in which we’ve been propelled by a powerful wave of feminism.

We know an awful lot about the problem, but how much are we doing about the solution?

Certainly, most Australian businesses acknowledge the need for gender equity in the workplace. Some might even have a thick dossier labelled Gender Equity Policy neatly bound and kept ‘on file’. But recent research shows too few companies are translating words into actions.

On the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report – which benchmarks 144 countries on their progress towards gender parity - Australia languishes in 35th place. On sub-indices - economic participation and opportunity, labour force participation, wage equality for similar work, and estimated earned income - we rank 42nd, 56th, 62nd and 63rd respectively. That’s a poor result for a nation that sees itself as the ‘lucky country’.

But this has nothing to do with luck.

We simply haven’t done enough to break up the old-fashioned boys clubs, to allow true diversity in our workplaces. Change needs to happen from the grassroots right through to the boardroom. Currently, the Australian Stock Exchange has a target to achieve 30 per cent female representation across ASX 200 boards by the end of 2018. The rate of change will have to improve significantly to meet that goal. According to the Bureau of Statistics women represent 57.5 per cent of degree qualified work entrants, but only 6.5 per cent of ASX 200 CEO positions. There is no logical reason for this disparity.

Gender equality isn’t just an ethical imperative. Top-flight professional services companies like KPMG and PricewaterhouseCoopers advise that

diversity improves the performance of companies and has the potential to add billions of dollars to the economy. It’s time to do more than talk about gender equality.

The time for action is NOW.

100 Days for Change is an initiative by Women & Leadership Australia (WLA). This campaign encourages organisations and individuals to take practical steps to address gender inequality in their workplaces, publicising commitments using the hashtag #100daysforchange.

This sense of urgency is what makes it such a powerful initiative. Participants are asked to make their pledges immediately, and implement the changes over a 100-day period between July 1 and October 8.

I am energised by my role as ambassador for this project because it echoes the ‘change of gear’ in my own public advocacy over the past six months. Last year it was all about words - telling stories and raising consciousness. But this year it’s about stepping up to the next level: 2018 is the year of making things happen.

Like the #metoo movement, 100 Days for Change is a circuit-breaker. It’s an initiative that says, “Enough talking! Let’s do something.”

Late last year, in the wake of revelations about sexual harassment by movie producer Harvey Weinstein, I sent out a tweet asking Australians for their stories about sexual harassment. I was entrusted with more than 1600 moving testimonies from women and men around the country, across all industries and backgrounds. They’re still pouring in.

That’s why I co-founded NOW Australia, a non-profit, non-partisan organisation to provide practical help to anyone who has been sexually harassed, assaulted or intimidated in the workplace. And that’s why I support 100 Days for Change: sexual harassment is only one of a suite of issues we must address in order to attain gender parity.

Undertaking substantial cultural and structural change is daunting. The

task can seem too huge, especially for small business. But, like all worthwhile journeys, it starts with one or two small steps. As Martin Luther King Jr observed, “*You don’t have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.*”

One organisation that has made the commitment to 100 Days for Change is public broadcaster SBS, which has already made significant steps. Director for People and Culture, Stig Bell, says the network is committed to putting inclusion at the centre of its organisational planning and practices.

And it’s working: 51 per cent of the network’s top leaders are women. Stig says this has been achieved through a commitment to inclusive recruitment practices and a culture where flexibility is embraced as an important part of supporting and retaining talented employees, regardless of gender. Initiatives such as onsite childcare and flexible working arrangements benefit employees and help SBS retain a pool of talented, experienced, and loyal workers.

SBS has also been successful in encouraging women into roles and leadership positions traditionally held by men, particularly in the area of operations and technology. Moving women into formerly male roles is a key strategy for closing the gender pay gap. (As is, of course, moving men into traditionally feminised occupations.)

Women & Leadership Australia says there are many ways individuals and organisations can take action and get involved in 100 Days for Change. These range from conducting a gender pay gap analysis to implementing organisational quotas for gender equality to starting a women’s network. WLA includes many more suggestions on the campaign website: www.wla.edu.au/100daysforchange.html

I’m proud to be part of this initiative and excited to see which Australian individuals and companies future-proof themselves and their business by making the commitment to #100daysforchange.



Resources

100 days for change, Women & Leadership Australia www.wla.edu.au/100daysforchange.html

NOW Australia www.now.org.au

PwC Women In Work Index: Closing the gender pay gap Australian edition, February 2017 www.pwc.com.au/people-business/assets/pwc-2017-women-in-work-feb17.pdf

Vodafone pioneers global maternity policy across 30 countries, 6 March 2015 www.vodafone.com/content/index/media/vodafone-group-releases/2015/global-maternity-policy.html

World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report, 2 November 2017 www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-gender-gap-report-2017

During her 30-year career, **Tracey Spicer** has reported for and anchored national news, current affairs and lifestyle programs for ABC TV, Network Ten, Channel 9 and Sky News. Currently she works as a weekly columnist for Fairfax, presentation trainer for Outspoken Women and media trainer at Spicer Communications. In 2017 she released her autobiography, *The Good Girl Stripped Bare*.