

Paper debunks myths on women as leaders ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Australian beliefs about the role of women are creating barriers for female employees seeking to gain leadership positions in business, a new policy exposition paper has found.

Commissioned by the Financial Services Institute of Australasia (Finsia), the paper says initiatives such as mentoring programs, forums and research will have limited effect until such beliefs are addressed.

Titled: 'Seven Myths about Women and Work', the paper was released on Wednesday and highlights excuses justifying the small number of women in leadership positions in Australian business.

The reasons include a lack of women, female childcare responsibilities, women lacking ambition, unnecessary targets set for women on boards, women being unable to negotiate, meritocracy in the workplace and exaggerations about the gender pay gap.

The research comes just weeks after the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace (EOWA) census of women in leadership showed that just 8.4 per cent of directors of ASX200 companies were female.

Moreover, there were only six female chief executives and five women chairs.

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The paper suggests introducing incentives to encourage paternity leave by men in order to break down prejudices about men in carer roles.

Other strategies include greater public expenditure on childcare, research about gender bias in certain roles and departments and strengthening support for staff transitioning back into the workplace after maternity/paternity leave.

Dr Fahy said there is no shortage of capable businesswomen in Australia, but assumptions are made about their commitment in the long term, making them less likely to be chosen for opportunities.

"At the same time, women are often deemed to be unsuitable for leadership roles because their careers fail to match the traditional templates or idea of success based on male breadwinner norms," he said.

"What's required is a radical change in norms and behaviours within our workplaces, to close the gap between policy, practice and attitudes."

Region: Australia and New Zealand ^[2]

Tags: gender ^[3]

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