

Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

Office for Women

GENDER BALANCE ON AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT BOARDS REPORT 2011-2012

A statistical analysis of the gender composition of Australian Government boards and bodies

A report on the representation of women and men on Australian Government boards reflecting progress against the Government's commitment to the 40:40:20 gender balance target

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FOREWORD by the Minister for the Status of Women

I am pleased to release the Gender Balance on Australian Government Boards Report 2011-2012. This report provides a comprehensive gender analysis of Australian Government boards and bodies, and delivers very positive results on the Government's commitment to achieve a minimum of 40 per cent women and 40 per cent men on Australian Government boards by 2015.

This year's results represent an all-time high for the Government, with 38.4 per cent of Government board appointments held by women as at 30 June 2012. This is a 3.1 per cent increase from 2011, and a 3.9 per cent increase since 2010, the year the target was announced.

As Minister for the Status of Women, I am committed to improving opportunities for women to hold leadership positions. We know that Australian women are just as skilled and educated as Australian men, and yet women are not equally represented in the country's top leadership ranks, particularly on high-level boards and decision-making bodies.

Through setting the target, the Australian Government is not only increasing women's representation in leadership and decision-making roles, we are also leading the way in broader cultural change around the way we view and value women and leadership.

The results of this year's report demonstrate the effectiveness of the Government's gender balance target. Not only have eight portfolios met the target, a doubling from four in 2011, a further 15 have increased the proportion of women appointed to their boards during 2011-2012. These results reflect the commitment of Ministers and their portfolios to the important issue of women in high-level leadership and decision-making roles, and indicate the Government is in a strong position to meet the gender balance target by 2015.

The Government is implementing a range of initiatives to support Ministers and their portfolios to meet this important target. I am pleased to be supporting BoardLinks, a network that has been established to provide more opportunities for women to be appointed to their first board, to launch and further their directorship careers, and increase the number of potential candidates for Australian Government boards. BoardLinks will also facilitate training, mentoring and support and was announced in November 2012 by the Minister for Finance and Deregulation, Senator the Hon Penny Wong.

Julie Collins, MP

Minister for the Status of Women

Executive Summary

The Australian Government is committed to gender equality in Australia's top leadership ranks. As a democratic society it is important that the issues, perspectives and needs of women are equally represented in decision-making processes. Greater gender diversity in leadership roles improves decision-making which in turn benefits the productive capacity of organisations and, more broadly, the economy.

This is why the Government is strongly committed to achieving a target of at least 40 per cent women and 40 per cent men on Australian Government boards by 2015 (the remaining 20 per cent can be either women or men).

This year's results reflect a substantial gain in the representation of women on Australian Government boards, demonstrating that when commitment is strong and the appropriate support is given, positive results can be achieved.

As at 30 June 2012, women held 38.4 per cent of Government board appointments. This is up from 35.3 per cent in 2011, demonstrating the sound progress made towards achieving the 40 per cent gender balance target by 2015.

Eight portfolios met or exceeded the 40 per cent target. This is a considerable gain from the four portfolios that met the target in 2011.

Women board members represented 41 per cent of new board appointments across government during the 2011-2012 financial year. This demonstrates that there are not only enough suitably qualified women to take up board positions and attain gender balance on Government boards, it also reflects the commitment of Ministers and their portfolios to appoint more women to their boards and achieve this important leadership target.

Introduction

Australian Government and Gender Equality

The Australian Government is strongly commitment to gender equality. This is demonstrated through the Government's focus on women's economic security and initiatives such as the reforms to the *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act* and Agency that acknowledge pay equity and the caring responsibilities of both women and men as central to gender equality. An important aspect of gender equality is supporting women in leadership and empowering women to achieve their full potential. The Government's commitment to gender balance on Australian Government boards demonstrates this support, and leads the way to wider cultural change around the way we as a nation view women and leadership.

Gender equality is about enabling women and men to reach their full potential to contribute to and benefit from economic, social, cultural and political participation. Participation is not the only important issue though. It is essential that women also receive social and financial recognition for the work they do and the contribution they make to Australian society. Women's representation in high level decision-making roles in both the public and private sectors is an important and visible form of recognition, and one in which the Government is determined to see greater improvement.

Gender Balance on Boards

Women make up over half the population so it makes sense to have equal representation in leadership roles. This not only allows individual women to reach their leadership potential, it also ensures quality outcomes for all Australians by ensuring the issues, perspectives and needs of women and men are equally represented in decision-making processes.

Evidence in the private sector shows that gender balance in top level decision-making roles increases the economic performance of boards.¹ This in turn benefits the economy and all Australians. We also know that improved governance and decision-making is associated with gender balance in top level decision-making roles more broadly.²

Gender balance in leadership roles also makes economic sense. Australia spends at least \$16.5 billion per year educating women and girls, yet Australian women represent a relatively untapped source of highly educated and skilled labour.³ Providing leadership opportunities to women will allow Australia to better harness women's skills and talents and reap the full rewards of investment in women's education and training.

Setting and achieving gender balance on Government boards is more than just about appointing the right number of women and men to meet the target. An expanding cohort of women leaders with experience on boards improves opportunities for a greater number of women to hold decision-making roles in the public and private sectors. Through committing to achieve the target, the Government is demonstrating leadership by providing the social and professional environment to enable broader cultural change around the way we view and value women and leadership.

Current Environment

The labour force participation rate of women in Australia was at 59.5 per cent cent in September 2012.⁴ Despite this having increased significantly over the last thirty years, women remain under-represented in senior leadership and management positions in virtually all sectors. Women are just as well educated, skilled and interested in leadership roles as their male counterparts.

Yet, as at 18 October 2012, they make up only 15.1 per cent of board members of Australia's top 200 companies (ASX 200), and a substantial 51 boards in the ASX 200 do not have any women.⁵

Corporate Australia is taking action to address this inequality through initiatives such as the diversity policy implemented by the ASX Corporate Governance Council, which requires publicly listed companies in Australia to set gender diversity targets. The ASX released its first independent report on 31 July 2012 which found that 98 per cent of the 211 sampled ASX-listed companies had established a diversity policy or had an explanation of why they had not. Encouragingly, the number of women in ASX 200 boardrooms has risen from 10.7 per cent as at 31 December 2010 to 15.1 per cent as at 18 October 2012, representing a 4.4 per cent increase.⁶

In addition, the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency produces the biennial Australian Census of Women in Leadership and measures the number of women in board and senior executive positions in ASX companies. In 2010, women held 12.3 per cent of ASX 200 directorships and 8 per cent of executive management positions.⁷

The Government is pleased to see other initiatives to support women in leadership such as the Male Champions of Change. In April 2010, the Australian Human Rights Commissioner brought together some of Australia's most influential and diverse male CEOs and Chairpersons to form the group who aim to use their individual and collective influence and commitment to ensure the issue of women's representation in leadership is elevated on the national business agenda.

Australia is not the only nation to identify gender equality in their leadership ranks as an issue. Many nations are taking actions to achieve gender balance on their private and public sector boards, including New Zealand, Norway and the United Kingdom. Norwegian law for example, demands gender balance on the boards of large companies in both the public and private sector, (with the exception of privately owned joint-stock companies). All the companies that come under this rule have now achieved gender balance on their boards.⁸ Through this action, the Norwegian Government has not only created the environment for fundamental change, but also triggered public debate about women and leadership, and gender equality more broadly not only within Norway, but also on the international stage.⁹

Australian Government Action

The Australian Government is undertaking a wide range of work to further enhance equality for all Australians and to facilitate greater opportunities for women's full economic and professional participation.

In March 2012 the Government introduced into Parliament the **Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Amendment Bill 2012**, which will achieve the dual purposes of improving gender equality outcomes in the workplace, as well as simplifying reporting for businesses. The new legislation strengthens the Act's focus on gender equality, highlighting equal remuneration between women and men, and caring responsibilities as key dimensions. For the first time under this Act, employers will be required to report on the gender composition of their boards, and the Minister will set industry-specific minimum standards to target attention to areas where improvements are most needed. The new legislation is currently under consideration by Parliament.

The provisions under the **Fair Work Act 2009** establish a framework that promotes fairness and flexibility for women in the workplace. The 10 National Employment Standards and modern awards provide a strong and stable safety net, a range of opportunities for flexible work arrangements, support for parental leave, strong protections against discrimination, support for collective bargaining in low paid industries and provisions for Fair Work Australia to order equal pay.

In January 2011 the Government introduced Australia's first **Paid Parental Leave** scheme. This payment allows working parents to stay at home to care for their newborn, while maintaining an attachment to the workforce. In addition, **Dad and Partner Pay** will be introduced from 1 January 2013, providing eligible fathers and partners with support to care for their children, further helping families to make their own choices around balancing work and caring responsibilities.

The Government not only supports broad structural change around workforce participation, it also works to deliver targeted initiatives designed to directly increase opportunities for women to take up leadership roles by working in partnership with stakeholders. In 2010-2011 the Government partnered with the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) on the **Board Diversity**Scholarship Program to promote change in the private sector. This program saw scholarships offered to 70 talented board-ready women and experienced female board members seeking Chair positions to attend the AICD Company Directors Course or Mastering the Boardroom Courses. The Prime Minister announced the second round of 70 scholarships in June 2012, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, culturally and linguistically diverse women, women from rural and regional communities, women with a disability and women working in the not-for-profit sector particularly encouraged to apply.

The Government recognises women's leadership is not just about high-level decision-making on public and private sector boards. Gender equality in leadership is important at all levels of decision-making and in all sectors. This is why the Government recently commissioned a national survey to find out more about **women's leadership programs in the community sector**. This will assist the Government to determine how best to support emerging women leaders in the community sector and further empower women to achieve their full potential. The survey was sent out for national distribution via community sector networks in September 2012.

Sport is an important part of Australian culture, with success and leadership in sport taking a high profile. The Government actively supports women in leadership roles in the sports industry through initiatives such as the **Women in Sport Leadership Register**, established to increase opportunities for women to be considered for leadership positions on Australia's sporting boards and bodies. The Government also funds **Sports Leadership Grants and Scholarships for Women** which provide meaningful development and training opportunities to help women advance into sport leadership roles across a broad spectrum of responsibilities, including coaching, officiating, governance, and media and communications.

Support to Achieve the Gender Balance Target

The Office for Women and the Department of Finance and Deregulation are delivering a suite of initiatives to support Ministers and their portfolios to reach the 40 per cent gender balance target.

The Office for Women is responsible for providing targeted support to portfolios to meet the gender balance target. A series of **Gender Balance on Australian Government Boards Forums** were delivered in mid 2012 to departmental officials to explore the issues affecting the gender balance on their portfolio's boards, and identify actions to address them. Drawing on extensive research and best-practice within the public and private sectors both domestically and internationally, and strategies identified at the forums, the Office for Women has also developed a **Gender Balance on Government Boards-Information for Portfolios** document providing a comprehensive list of actions portfolios could employ to address the gender balance of their boards (http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/our-responsibilities/women/publications-articles/government-international/gender-balance-on-australian-government-boards-information-for-portfolios).

Portfolios that do not meet or maintain the gender balance target in any given year are required to develop **Board Target Gender Balance Plans** (the Plans) on an annual basis until the target is met. The Office for Women developed a template and worksheet for the Plans, which will assist portfolios to develop targeted strategies to meet the gender balance target by 2015. Portfolios that did not meet 40 per cent representation of women as at 30 June 2012 are due to submit their Plans to the Minister for the Status of Women in December 2012.

Existing Government mechanisms to facilitate gender balanced appointments can be accessed by portfolios. These include the **Australian Public Service Commission's merit and transparency guidelines** which encourage an increase in the representation of women in senior government appointments (http://www.apsc.gov.au/publishcaitons08/meritandtransparency.htm), and the **Commonwealth Government Business Enterprise Governance and Oversight Guidelines** which state that Government Business Enterprise Boards will develop annual board plans that include an assessment of the skill and diversity requirements for the board in the context of the Government's policy objectives regarding gender balance on Government boards (http://www.finance.gov.au/publications/governance-arrangement/index.html).

Portfolios can also access the services of the **Gender Panel** which provides expertise for government agencies to assist them in undertaking gender assessment and related work. Panel members include organisations and individuals with demonstrated experience in gender analysis in areas including research, gender analysis training and gender balance on boards. The Gender Panel List and Guide to Services can be found at: (http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/women/progwerv.gender_panel_user/pages/panel_members.aspx).

Reporting

There are 457 Government boards, bodies and committees included in this report, and their roles and responsibilities are as diverse as the Australian population. They include policy advisory boards, Government Business Enterprises, and review and enquiry boards. These boards cover issues ranging from shipwrecks to animal welfare, and Australia Post to ethics in military research.

The gender balance of these boards, bodies and committees is reported annually in the *Gender Balance on Australian Government Boards Report* (the Report). The Report reflects the Government's commitment to gender balance on Government boards and provides year to year tracking of progress against the gender balance target. It is worth noting however, that a disadvantage of comparing year to year data is lack of precision and time delays in the identification of turning points in a series. Turning points occur when the direction of the underlying level of the series changes, such as when a consistently decreasing or increasing series begins to change, perhaps due to multiple appointment terms completing or a male dominated board ceasing. However, whilst comparing year apart data can result in missing turning points occurring during the year, it still provides an accurate overall picture of long-term changes to the gender balance of Australian Government boards.

The gender balance target includes appointments for which the Government has some control or influence over the selection or approval of the appointment. Only appointments that are approved or appointed by a Minister, the Cabinet or the Governor-General, regardless of the selection method, are included in the gender balance target.

The gender balance target applies at a portfolio level – not at an individual board level. This provides flexibility to the specific make-up of individual boards within the broader portfolio target.

The Report includes a whole-of-government headline statistic for the number and percentage of positions held by women and men on Government boards and bodies as at 30 June 2012. Information is also provided by portfolio, including portfolio ranking. Statistics on new board appointments between 1 July 2011 and 30 June 2012 are also provided, giving a picture of how individual portfolios are progressing towards meeting the gender balance target.

The Report is compiled by the Australian Government Office for Women. Appointment data is provided by portfolios. Portfolios hold all responsibility for the accuracy of the data provided to the Office for Women.

The Office for Women assisted portfolios with the data collection process by providing detailed data collection Guidelines and holding a data collection workshop. In addition, the Office for Women incorporated quality assurance processes for the data submitted by portfolios. Firstly, all portfolio data was provided to the Office for Women with a Statement of Assurance from Departmental Executives. Once received, the Office for Women undertook data field analysis on all portfolios' data, and year to year data comparison by portfolio and by board. Cleaned data was sent back to portfolios for confirmation. Once all final adjustments were made, Deputy Secretaries provided confirmation of the accuracy of their final data. This methodology provides the optimal conditions for collecting accurate and accountable data and a consistent dataset across government.

Gender Balance Target Results

Gender Balance Target

The 2011-2012 gender balance target results measure the percentage of women and men in over 4000 board appointments to more than 450 Australian Government boards and bodies across Government. The data in **Table 1** provides the number of boards, and the percentage and number of appointees by gender, per portfolio, as at 30 June 2012. The gender balance target results for 30 June 2011 are provided to illustrate the gains made by portfolios.

As at 30 June 2012, women held 38.4 per cent and men held 61.6 per cent of the 4129 board positions to 457 Government boards and bodies. This represents a 3.1 per cent increase from last year's result and an all-time high for the Government.

Table 1: Gender Balance as at 30 June 2012

					2012 G Balance Meas	Target	2011 G Balance Meas	Target
Portfolio	No. of Boards	Total Appoint- ments	Number Female	Number Male	% Female	% Male	% Femaie	% Male
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	25	168	66	102	39.3%	60.7%	36.0%	64.0%
Attorney-General's	21	166	87	79	52.4%	47.6%	50.7%	49.3%
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy	6	40	15	25	37.5%	62.5%	35.6%	64.4%
Climate Change and Energy Efficiency	7	47	16	31	34.0%	66.0%	33.3%	66.7%
Defence*	20	194	49	145	25.3%	74.7%	26.9%	73.1%
Education, Employment and Workplace Relations	18	183	78	105	42.6%	57.4%	36.9%	63.1%
Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs	13	119	64	55	53.8%	46.2%	50.4%	49.6%
Finance and Deregulation	9	49	19	30	38.8%	61.2%	31.1%	68.9%
Foreign Affairs and Trade	15	104	42	62	40.4%	59.6%	36.8%	63.2%
Health and Ageing	69	809	355	454	43.9%	56.1%	38.2%	61.8%
Human Services	1	6	2	4	33.3%	66.7%	33.3%	66.7%
Immigration and Citizenship	5	44	19	25	43.2%	56.8%	50.0%	50.0%
Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education	66	570	174	396	30.5%	69.5%	24.8%	75.2%
Infrastructure and Transport	11	58	20	38	34.5%	65.5%	28.1%	71.9%
Prime Minister and Cabinet	5	46	23	23	50.0%	50.0%	45.4%	54.6%
Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport	95	879	359	520	40.8%	59.2%	37.2%	62.8%
Resources, Energy and Tourism	7	57	15	42	26.3%	73.7%	27.3%	72.7%
Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities	30	265	92	173	34.7%	65.3%	29.5%	70.5%
Treasury	34	325	92	233	28.3%	71.7%	27.9%	72.1%
TOTAL	457	4129	1587	2542	38.4%	61.6%	35.3%	64.7%
* The Defence portfolio includes data fro	m the follo	owing Depa	artments:					
Defence	12	101	31	70	30.7%	69.3%	32.7%	67.3%

Defence	12	101	31	70	30.7%	69.3%	32.7%	67.3%
Veteran's Affairs	8	93	18	75	19.4%	80.6%	18.8%	81.2%

Portfolio Ranking

Comparisons across portfolios must be considered within the context of the wide range of board appointments within Australian Government portfolios. How appointments are made and the level of Government influence on who is appointed varies substantially from board to board.

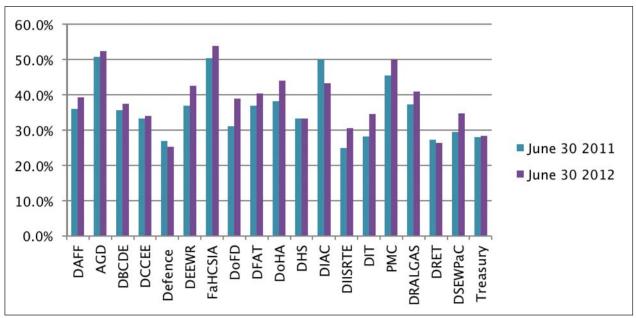
Graph 1 shows each portfolio's current status against the gender balance target, and compares this with their status as at 30 June 2011.

As at 30 June 2012 eight portfolios met or exceeded the 40 per cent gender balance target. This is a considerable improvement from the four portfolios that met the target in 2011.

Of the four portfolios that met the target last year, and with respect to the representation of women, the Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs portfolio sits comfortably at 53.8 per cent, followed closely by the Attorney-General's portfolio on 52.4 per cent. The portfolio of Prime Minister and Cabinet is at 50.0 per cent, and the Immigration and Citizenship portfolio is at 43.2 per cent.

A big success story to come out of this year's results is the four portfolios that have newly met the target. These portfolios include Health and Ageing; Education, Employment and Workplace Relations; Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sports; and Foreign Affairs and Trade. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry portfolio sit just under the target at 39.3 per cent representation of women, followed closely by the portfolios of Finance and Deregulation; and Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy. These portfolios expect to meet the target in the very near future.

Graph 1: Portfolio Ranking as at 30 June 2012



New Appointments

New appointments are an important gauge for monitoring the commitment and effectiveness of the actions portfolios are taking to improve the gender balance of their boards. New appointments are appointments made between 1 July 2011 and 30 June 2012. This does not include reappointments. Of the 4129 appointments reported, around 40 per cent were new appointments.

Table 2 provides the number and percentage of women and men in new appointments in each portfolio, during the 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 financial years.

Of the 1633 new appointments to Government boards between 1 July 2011 and 30 June 2012, women represented 41.0 per cent (669) and men represented 59.0 per cent (964).

Table 2: New Appointments 2011-2012

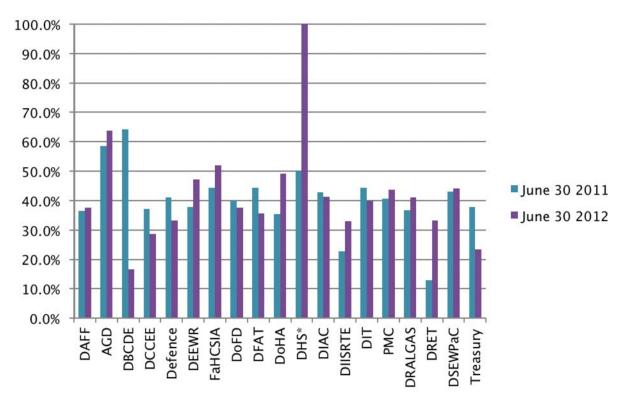
			2012 Gender Balance Target Measures		2011 Gender Balance Target Measures			
Portfolio	Total New Appoint- ments	Number Female	Number Male	% Female	% Male	% Femaie	% Male	
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	72	27	45	37.5%	62.5%	36.4%	63.6%	
Attorney-General's	58	37	21	63.8%	36.2%	58.5%	41.5%	
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy	12	2	10	16.7%	83.3%	64.3%	35.7%	
Climate Change and Energy Efficiency	35	10	25	28.6%	71.4%	37.1%	62.9%	
Defence*	69	23	46	33.3%	66.7%	41.0%	59.0%	
Education, Employment and Workplace Relations	136	64	72	47.1%	52.9%	37.7%	62.3%	
Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs	52	27	25	51.9%	48.1%	44.4%	55.6%	
Finance and Deregulation	24	9	15	37.5%	62.5%	40.0%	60.0%	
Foreign Affairs and Trade	42	15	27	35.7%	64.3%	44.4%	55.6%	
Health and Ageing	236	116	120	49.2%	50.8%	35.5%	64.5%	
Human Services	1	1	0	100.0%	0%	50.0%	50.0%	
Immigration and Citizenship	17	7	10	41.2%	58.8%	42.9%	57.1%	
Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education	257	85	172	33.1%	66.9%	22.8%	77.2%	
Infrastructure and Transport	15	6	9	40.0%	60.0%	44.4%	55.6%	
Prime Minister and Cabinet	32	14	18	43.75%	56.25%	40.7%	59.3%	
Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport	421	173	248	41.1%	58.9%	36.8%	63.2%	
Resources, Energy and Tourism	9	3	6	33.3%	66.7%	13.0%	87.0%	
Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities	77	34	43	44.2%	55.8%	43.1%	56.9%	
Treasury	68	16	52	23.5%	76.5%	37.7%	62.3%	
TOTAL	1633	669	964	41.0%	59.0%	36.5%	63.5%	
* The Defence portfolio includes data from the following Departments:								

Defence	24	9	15	37.5%	62.5%	54.5%	45.5%
Veteran's Affairs	45	14	31	31.1%	68.9%	23.5%	76.5%

Graph 2 shows portfolios by the percentage of women appointed to new appointments between 1 July 2011 and 30 June 2012, and compares this with their new appointments in 2010-2011.

Over half of the 19 portfolios appointed at least 40 per cent women to new board appointments. In the Attorney-General's portfolio, 63.8 per cent of new appointments were to women. They were followed by Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs with 51.9 per cent.

Graph 2: New Female Appointments 2011-2012 by portfolio



^{*}DHS made one new appointment between 1 July 2011 and 30 June 2012.

- 1 Reibey Institute, ASX 500 Women Leaders: Research Note, Riverview, NSW, 2010.
- 2 A McIntyre, *Tomorrow's Boards: Creating balanced and effective boards*, Australian Institute of Company Directors, Sydney, 2011.
- 3 Ernst & Young, Women in leadership What will it take to get Australia on target?, 2011.
- 4 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Australia, September 2012, ABS cat. no. 6202.0, ABS, Canberra 2012.
- 5 Australian Institute of Company Directors, Director Resource Centre, Statistics, Appointments to ASX200 boards, available at: http://www.companydirectors.com.au/Director-Resource-Centre/Governance-and-Director-Issues/Board-Diversity/Statistics.
- 6 Australian Institute of Company Directors, Director Resource Centre, Statistics, Appointments to ASX200 boards, available at: http://www.companydirectors.com.au/Director-Resource-Centre/Governance-and-Director-Issues/Board-Diversity/Statistics.
- 7 The 2012 Census of Women in Leadership will be released on 27 November 2012 and will be available at: http://www.eowa.gov.au/Information_Centres/Resource_Centre/EOWA_Publications/EOWA_Census.asp.
- 8 Norwegian Government, Ministry for Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, Gender Equality, Gender balance on boards, available at: http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/bld/Topics/equality-and-discrimination/gender-equality. html?id=670481.
- 9 A Storvik & M Teigen, *Women on Board: The Norwegian experience*, International Policy Analysis, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Academic Foundation, June 2010.