



TRADES WOMEN AUSTRALIA FOUNDATION

**INFLUENCERS – WOMEN – WORKPLACE
SEGREGATION**

REPORT - RESEARCH CONSOLIDATION

May 2019

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INFLUENCERS – WOMEN – WORKPLACE SEGREGATION

RESEARCH: CONSOLIDATED REPORT

SUMMARY SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

The source of data used in this report is evidence-based research that is recent, relevant and verifiable. Key spheres of influence are summarised and is supported by research cited:

1. PARENTAL INFLUENCES

Parental influence of children (girls in particular), in early years, however, especially when the student is embarking on making critical decisions about their future career is pivotal. Attitudes, strong (often misconceived) views have a major influence in the decision making process. This is particularly the case if, from the parent's viewpoint, the child is making the '*wrong*' decision (generally based on parent's engrained beliefs) and is exploring entering male-dominated fields such as the building and construction sector. Lack of family role models (e.g. a female family member working in the construction or mining industry) further influences career choice.

2. PUPILS IN SCHOOL – PRIMARY AND SECONDARY

Gender stereotyping has a major influence on the formation of student's views about the 'correct' pathway to a career. Stereotyping begins in early years (pre-primary school), and persists through most aspects of school life (e.g. sports, activities, interests). The negative influences of stereotyping is reinforced through classroom attitudes and culture, often combined with general discouragement by teachers and educators if girls express an interest in exploring work opportunities in 'male workplace domains'. Direct evidence cited in research demonstrates the level of influence directed at career choices for girls.

3. TEACHERS AND EDUCATORS

While teachers have a major influence on student's attitudes and views in early education, research demonstrates that this is particularly the case in the later years of secondary school, when students, (particularly girls) are exploring their work future. Teachers may have the best of intentions, however, they lack resources and sufficient knowledge when they find themselves asked for positive support by a female student wishing to become a trades apprentice, or seeking work experience as a mechanic.

4. EMPLOYERS

Employers (in the male-dominated trades sector), overall, show little support and encouragement for girls wishing to enter an apprenticeship. The employer's approach is driven by embedded 'old' attitudes, coupled with 'concerns' about situations that may arise (with male workers) in the workplace. This reluctance, and lack of support, generally becomes a major influencing factor, discouraging women from 'intruding' into male dominated sectors (e.g. building & construction) regardless of the fact there are sound economic, skills shortage and capability reasons for a reversal of attitude.

5. UNIONS

Key unions influencing the male dominated trades sector (e.g. CFMEU¹) are pivotal to the uptake of employment of women and the increase female apprenticeships. In recent years, there has been a complete reversal of attitudes, evidenced by the current approach of major unions. Key unions now actively fight for abolition of discriminatory practices and removal of pay gaps. The CFMEU engages employers, pro-actively seeking apprenticeships and educating them about potential opportunities and advantages, particularly to address skill shortages.

6. VOCATIONAL & EDUCATIONAL TRAINING - VET

Major issues facing VET is 'perception' and lack of awareness. A general perception of VET is that it is of inferior status to university – not the 'best choice' for career development. In fact, those passing through the VET system have more opportunities for employment and (generally) receive equivalent wages. The VET pathway does not limit future advancement to management levels or areas of specialised skills. Female students aspiring to enter the 'male trades' workforce, would be best advantaged by apprenticeship – training through VET. However, key influencers (for instance, teachers, career advisors) generally have limited awareness about VET and what can be achieved, and often discourage females pursuing this avenue.

7. LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

While state and federal governments, generally, go to great lengths to state their support and 'initiatives', encouraging women's participation in the workforce, in fact, several programs have been in existence for many years and have achieved little to assist females aspiring to enter the male dominated trades sector. Many such programs are information-based, and are passive. Funding is limited by government priorities and agencies can appear to be in 'competition', seldom networking and operating within silos, making helpful information and support difficult to find.

¹ Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union

1. PARENTAL INFLUENCES – WORKPLACE SEGREGATION

Observation:

Parental influence plays a pivotal role in a child's aspirations, attitudes and perceptions about their future careers / employment prospects. A substantial body of evidence supports this statement. For example:

Gender stereotypes

(ACT Women in Trades Research Summary (Attachment A): www.skills.act.gov.au accessed April 2019)

'Gender stereotyping was identified as the prevalent cause of female worker shortages in male dominated trades. Despite generally progressive gender perspectives in Australia, occupations such as building, plumbing, automotive, engineering and electro technology are still male dominated. This is not because women lack the skills to participate; rather, they lack the opportunities to take up technical or trade subjects in school. They are not encouraged, and too often are actively discouraged, to undertake apprenticeships in these areas.

While many female tradespeople who take up positions in traditionally male dominated trade industries manage to overcome this barrier with determination and hard work, all of them stressed the importance of orienting families, career advisors and children away from stereotypes from a young age. Additionally, negative experiences and/or perceptions of workplace cultures in male dominated industries discourage women from accessing study pathways such as apprenticeships and ASBA² type opportunities in these fields.^A ...'

(A) Table 4 presents statistics of ASBA qualifications accessed by male and female students.

Parent's Influence

Survey reveals parental influence on students' career choices

'The majority of students say their parents play a major role in their decision-making about careers and study, according to a report published last week. More than half (54%) of the students who took part said that their parents tried to exert influence over their choice of course or career, while 69% said their parents had tried to influence their choice of university'. (Source: GTI Media (GTI Media Ltd. Registered in England) Research [no date] accessed 20 April 2019)

Parents serve as a major influence in their children's career development and career decision-making. Parents want their children to find happiness and success in life and one factor which influences happiness and success is career choice. Research also indicates that when students feel supported and loved by their parents, they have more confidence in their own ability to research careers and to choose a career that would be interesting and exciting. This is important because studies show that adolescents, who feel competent regarding career decision-making, tend to make more satisfying career choices later in life. (Keller 2004).

² Australian School Based Apprenticeships (ASBAs) - ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies

Opportunities and Challenges

Development of strategies that engage parents of school-aged girls at an early age, with the objective of countering preconceptions, stereotypes and attitudinal bias against women's involvement in male-dominated trades; developing awareness of opportunities and rewards offered within the trades sector. Develop parent awareness and support initiatives and provide resources enabling objective decision making and a positive approach.

2. PUPILS – PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL

Observation:

There is evidence to support that there is a significant spectrum of gender bias existing throughout a child's pathway through the primary and secondary education system. Research indicates that employment and career decision making commences in early childhood development. Career / vocational choices are influenced by gender bias during formative years.

Getting in early to avoid gender stereotyping careers

Citation: On The Origins of Gender Human Capital Gaps: Short and Long Term Consequences of Teachers' Stereotypical Biases. Victor Lavy, Edith Sand. NBER Working Paper No. 20909 Issued in January 2015

By pre-school children are already thinking about the career they will have when they grow up. It is also at this early stage that they tend to rule out jobs that do not fit with their gender.

Four-year-olds have shown a strong gender bias towards jobs. Girls choose typically female occupations while boys tend to show interest in typically male occupations. Pre-schoolers seem reluctant to cross gender work roles.

To counter the impact of gender stereotypes on careers, many educators I've spoken to in my research say career-related learning should take place in early primary years. The concern is that by years 8-10 the subject and career choices of students were well and truly gender-segregated.

Evidence gathered across 50 countries showed that as a result of this gender segregation by year 10, far fewer girls pursue maths and science. The female students who do not complete advanced-level maths are unlikely to pursue the male-dominated science, technology, engineering, maths (STEM) post-school careers.

Young people need to see they can be free to choose from the full range of careers – not the gendered range that has been cultivated in books, media, toys and magazines – and this kind of thinking needs to start from a young age. (Struthers, K. Phd Student Griffith University; Master of Public Sector Management (Hons) Griffith University and Bachelor of Social Work (Hons) University of Queensland.)

Barriers

Lack of family role models: From the very start, women are not exposed to career paths in the mining, construction and utilities industries as early or as often as men. Many men learn about potential roles in these industries from their fathers or other male relatives. However, women are not likely to come across these opportunities until later in life if they do not have access to male role models in these industries. In addition, this exposure is more likely to occur in formal settings (i.e. recruitment information sessions) than from the more in-depth, personal connections that may be made among men. (Source: Women in male-dominated industries: A toolkit of strategies Australian Human Rights Commission 2013)

Who has the most influence on students' thinking about possible careers?

(Source: STATS IN BRIEF U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION JANUARY 2018 NCES 2018-0.Ceylan Oymak NuCoreVision)

Family members and 'myself' were most often reported as the main influence for students' thinking about careers, with school staff less frequently reported as the main influence

In terms of who most influenced students' career decisions, family members and 'myself' were again the most commonly reported sources, although there was no measurable difference in the percentage of students who chose these options (41 and 42 percent, respectively;). School staff were again reported less frequently; as with education after high school, relatively few students (6 percent) indicated that a teacher had the most influence on their thinking about careers, and only 3 percent indicated that a counsellor had the most influence.

Who Is Interested in Traditional Trades as a Career?

(Source: School Students Making Education and Career Decisions: Aspirations, Attitudes and Influences Final Report Prof Nola Alloway Dr Leanne Dalley A/Prof Annette Patterson Dr Karen Walker Mr Max Lenoy School of Education, James Cook University)

Focus group results show that interest in the traditional trades depended strongly on student SES³, locality, gender and academic orientation. Across the three states, few students attending upper and middle SES schools reported an interest in adopting a traditional trade as a career or in pursuing a school-based apprenticeship even if they were more readily available. By comparison, more students in the lower SES schools, and in the rural school, were favourably disposed to the idea. Among the latter two groups, boys in these schools were more interested than were the girls.

Opportunities and Challenges

Research indicates that students, male and female, from a young (primary school age) either do not receive sufficient information and guidance about their future careers, or the information is slanted and biased, reflecting prejudices, and misconceptions.

Research indicates that girls, in particular, are significantly influenced / not supported, especially if they display an interest in 'blue collar' trades.

Programs to be developed that address these gaps from every aspect; developing and increasing parent's awareness, and providing educators with resources to actively promote planning and foster aspirations.

There is room for a great deal of work to combat attitudes that portray VET⁴ pathways to male-dominated industries as 'inferior'; 'not appropriate for females'.

³ Socio-Economic Status.

⁴ Vocational Education and Training

3. TEACHERS

Observation:

There is evidence based research that indicates a significant number of teachers (both primary and secondary) carry subconscious gender bias, formed from experiential / life journey / cultural factors. This bias adversely affects pupil's vocation / career decisions / learning pathways, favouring boys towards certain (male-dominated) trades.

Research demonstrates that teachers are limited by time resources, are unaware of opportunities (for progression of girls into a wide range of trades / careers) and do not have career pathway resources to support / encourage girls showing an interest in entering into a male-dominated career pathway.

Research demonstrates that teachers (secondary school) express a lack of awareness of VET, and little understanding of VET pathways for girls leading into careers in the 'blue collar' sector, particularly building and construction.

The Student's Viewpoint:

Who has the most influence on students' thinking about education after high school? (Source: STATS IN BRIEF U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION JANUARY 2018 NCES 2018-0.Ceylan Oymak NuCoreVision)

A significant amount of research has been done on this topic, most of which has been conducted within the framework of "Social Cognitive Career Theory" (SCCT). SCCT focuses on individuals' internal, cognitive processes (e.g., achievement, expectations) and how those cognitions interact with external, contextual factors (e.g., social supports and barriers) to influence career decisions and development (Lent, Brown, and Hackett 1994, 2000).

Career Advice:

(Source: Key Finding 4; STATS IN BRIEF U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION JANUARY 2018 NCES 2018-0.Ceylan Oymak NuCoreVision)

Career-related information used by Career Advisers, students and parents was sourced from diverse places including government publications, school information events, internet sites and university Open Days. Career Advisers who adopted a student centred approach were identified as a key resource by students and parents whereas those who adopted an information-centred approach were not viewed as a key resource.

Opportunities and Challenges

Research shows that there is a wide range of levels of support provided by teachers / educators to students who are planning their future; in most cases less than adequate. Drivers are: lack of resources / time; inadequate information; workplace culture influences (particular to females / blue collar work places).

Evidence links solid correlation between educator early support of career aspirations of (particularly female) students with objective exploration of opportunities in male-dominated workplaces such as the building and construction industry.

4. EMPLOYERS

Observation:

Research demonstrates that a major impediment faced by women aspiring to enter male-dominated trades (particularly building and construction) is resistance / lack of support (generally based on misconceptions, 'ingrained' culture and stereotypical beliefs) by employers; attitudes and workplace issues of peer employees that is left largely unchallenged by employers and a lack of leadership generally.

While there are (few) outstanding examples of a pro-active approach by particular employers, facilitating women's entrance into the male-dominated (traditionally a 'male domain') workforce, strong statistical evidence demonstrates that a focussed campaign, strategically designed to bring about significant and enduring change is an essential requirement.

Skills Shortage and Inequality

Source: Women in male-dominated industries: A toolkit of strategies Australian Human Rights Commission 2013

'In Australia, the underrepresentation of women in industries considered to be 'male-dominated', continues to affect gender equality, industry performance and our nation's economy. By 'male-dominated', I am referring to industries such as mining, utilities and construction.

There is a skills shortage in Australia and 45% of Australian employers are having difficulty filling key positions in their organisations. Employers have the most difficulty finding skilled trades people, engineers and sales representatives, all of which have remained at the top of the local skills shortage list since 2006. With little movement in these figures in the last five years, Australia ranks fourth in the world in talent shortages, well above the global average.

Attracting and retaining underutilised sources of talent, including women, is key to addressing this skills shortage. This is particularly true in industries that have relied traditionally and historically on men to fill roles, including the mining, construction and utilities industries.'

Women & Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia

Source: 'Trade Unions'; Rosemary Francis, IT Access, Historical and Philosophical Studies. The University of Melbourne 2014

Blue-collar workers comprised approximately 70 per cent of the union movement until the 1950s, when increasing numbers of white-collar workers became unionised until the percentage of the blue-collar work force fell from 61.1 per cent in 1954 to 49.5 per cent in 1971 (Bowden, 66). The image of the trade union movement was that of a muscular man in a blue singlet, not a culture sympathetic to women workers and not one to which many women were attracted. From the perspective of this male trade unionist, women workers represented a threat to their pay and conditions, for women were traditionally paid at almost half the rate of a male worker. The gender structure of Australian society placed men at the top of the employment hierarchy; they held the skilled occupations, with women relegated to the so-called unskilled work.

Why Gender Segregation Matters

Source: Perfect For A Woman; Increasing the Participation of Women in Electrical Trades October 2017. Dr Anne Jones Professor Emeritus Berwyn Clayton Professor Emeritus Dr Naomi Pfitzner Hugh Guthrie Honorary Fellow, University Victoria.

Many researchers have reported that employers who recruit more women not only have access to more potential employees but to skills that tend to be scarce in male-dominated workforces such as improved communications and customer relationships, better team work, work processes, and problem-solving (Department of Family and Community Services Women NSW, 2013; Schuck, 2014).

Internationally and in Australia, research demonstrates that increased employment of women improves business productivity by broadening the range of capabilities available in a workplace. For example, Goldman Sachs have calculated that the rise in female labour force participation between 1974 and 2009 improved Australia's economy by 22% and that closing the gap between male and female labour force participation rates could boost the Australian GDP by 11% (Toohey, Colosimo, & Boak, 2009).

These views are supported by employers of tradeswomen we have interviewed for this and previous studies (unpublished work conducted for Auto Skills Australia included interviews with 42 employers, 17 automotive tradeswomen and 26 female apprentices). They reported that women in trades roles are more organised and better problem solvers than males.

Employment of Women in Male-Dominated Industries

Source: Women in male-dominated industries: A toolkit of strategies Australian Human Rights Commission 2013

The mining, construction and utilities industries have historically been perceived to be a 'man's domain' and the representation of women has remained low across all levels. In Australia, organisations in these industries have struggled to not only attract women to consider and apply for jobs, they have also had challenges in retaining the women who have chosen to work with them.

Women are underrepresented in these industries

Women represent almost 46% of all employees in Australia and in many sectors there is a growing pipeline of women in leadership roles. The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), formally known as the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA), reports that in 2011 over 33% of managers in reporting organisations were women.ii Industries that have the greatest representation of women at all levels include health care, education and training and retail trade.iii In industries described as 'male-dominated', including mining, construction and utilities, the picture is very different. Not only are women underrepresented in leadership and managerial roles, they are also underrepresented across all levels of the organisation. This underrepresentation is particularly evident in roles that have been described as 'non-traditional' ie roles that are operational, technical and in the trades.

APPRENTICESHIPS FOR WOMEN

A Perfect Storm - The Decimation Of Australia's Apprenticeship System

Source: Joint CFMEU and AEU Research Paper July 2017

Recommendation 2.1:

Investment needs to be made by governments, unions, employers, schools and vocational education institutions in addressing negative workplace behaviour and facilitating culture change. Gender stereotypes need to be challenged through education campaigns and policies and further investment in policies and programs to encourage more women into apprenticeships.

Recommendation 2.2:

Gender appropriate facilities must be provided in all educational institutions and workplaces or alternatively mixed facilities with sufficient individual privacy where appropriate.

Recommendation 2.3:

Significant investment needs to be made to dismantle structural barriers facing women in male-dominated workforces, including access to family friendly working environments (e.g. flexible rosters and hours).

Recommendation 3.1:

Data on the number of apprentice vacancies vs. number of applicants needs to be adequately collected to give a clearer picture of the labour market for apprentices and trainees.

Recommendation 3.2:

A study of employer expectations of apprentices needs to be undertaken. If employers are using apprentices solely as cheap labour, looking only to hire partially skilled or experienced apprentices while at the same time being unwilling to pay extra for it, it is not surprising that employers find most applicants unsuitable.

Opportunities and Challenges

Employers (in the male-dominated trades sector) are generally lagging behind their counterparts in other sectors who have developed programs and structure to ensure strong participation of the women workforce.

Research demonstrates that trades / blue collar sector employers (particularly in the building and construction industries) are on the whole resistant to change, and are too quick to identify 'difficulties', for instance, loss of productivity due to pregnancy leave; requirements for installation of facilities, and 'potential problems and consequential legal issues' that could arise when women are placed in a male dominated workplace environment.

These employers, therefore, demonstrate the critical need for development of a focussed approach, where myths, misperceptions and concerns are dispelled, where employers (and women entering their workforce) will be supported and the financial value of tapping into the female workforce (particularly as apprentices) is identified.

The strategy driving these initiatives will be most effective when combined with other stakeholders; for example, unions, VET and government.

5. UNIONS

Observation:

Over recent years, trade unions have changed their 'conservative' attitudes towards women entering male-dominated trades. The unions were protective of the 'traditional' male environment; following the prevalent culture, which governed the workplace, employers, and sectors of the community generally, that there was no place for women 'workers', particularly in the building and construction industry.

'Blue Collar' unions are now pro-active in their approach to raising women's participation in the 'traditional male-dominated trades', delivering awareness programs and supporting trade careers for women. There are still challenges, impediments and barriers, most particularly workplace culture, which in turn drives employer's decision-making processes.

Women In Leadership 20th Century Australia

Source: 'Trade Unions'; Rosemary Francis, IT Access, Historical and Philosophical Studies. The University of Melbourne 2014

There is evidence that the trade union movement is gradually improving the percentage of women in leadership positions within unions. Yet there is still a clear pattern of gendered hierarchical and occupational segmentation in unions (ACTU Women's Committee, 5) where unions' industry coverage could generally be considered female, such as in teaching, accommodation and food services, administrative and support services and the finance and insurance services, there were 48 per cent or more women on the national executive. Women are still generally not represented proportionately in senior elected positions and overrepresented in the ranks of administrative, support and 'specialist' positions. These positions are often removed from the centre of power, while men are more likely to occupy positions of influence.

Old problems remain as barriers to women's involvement and, by extension, to their leadership in unions: a lack of role models, the persistence of stereotyped perceptions of the role of women in unions, together with a lack of support for women delegates who wish to move into more senior positions, and a lack of flexible work options to assist women to balance work and family.

Blue-collar workers comprised approximately 70 per cent of the union movement until the 1950s, when increasing numbers of white-collar workers became unionised until the percentage of the blue-collar work force fell from 61.1 per cent in 1954 to 49.5 per cent in 1971 (Bowden, 66). The image of the trade union movement was that of a muscular man in a blue singlet, not a culture sympathetic to women workers and not one to which many women were attracted. From the perspective of this male trade unionist, women workers represented a threat to their pay and conditions, for women were traditionally paid at almost half the rate of a male worker. The gender structure of Australian society placed men at the top of the employment hierarchy; they held the skilled occupations, with women relegated to the so-called unskilled work.

Bargaining For Women Members

(Source: Women In Unions Report ACTU 2012)

For the first time in 2010-11, unions were asked about whether issues of concern to women members were specifically taken into account in bargaining. This is an area where improvement is clearly needed- a staggering one half of all unions did not have a standard bargaining claim for key priority issues for women including flexible work arrangements for employees with caring responsibilities or the right to return to work part-time from parental leave and one third did not have a standard bargaining claim for parental leave.

Equal Remuneration, Sexual Harassment And Equal Employment Opportunity

(Source: Women In Unions Report ACTU 2012)

Less than one third (28.57%) of unions reported that they had a standard workplace claim regarding equal remuneration. These unions reported that they had successfully negotiated such a provision into 75% or more of their agreements.

Ten unions (35.71%) reported having a standard claim regarding sexual harassment. Five unions reported having negotiated provisions regarding sexual harassment into more than 75% of their agreements and six other unions reported achieving this claim in about 50% of agreements they had negotiated to date.

Finally, 11 unions (39.28%) reported having a standard equal employment opportunity claim for bargaining. Six of the 11 unions had these provisions in more than 75% of agreements with 4 unions reporting having negotiated clauses regarding equal opportunity into at least half of its agreements.

A small number (3 unions) reported having Affirmative Action provisions in standard bargaining claims.

Opportunities and Challenges

The union movement, particularly those representing the building and construction sector, have 'modified' their approach to women to the point that they are pro-active advocates and have made beneficial changes in recent years, but still have quite a distance to go. Unions, generally, have lost a significant amount of their levels of influence, due to workplace attitudes, legislation and falling membership numbers.

There are opportunities for collaborative engagement with unions (CFMEU⁵ in particular) to build and implement strategies to assist combatting the major challenges facing women entering the sector. This approach represents common interest and would build synergetic relationships.

⁵ Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union

6. VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET)

Observation:

Research (multiple sources) indicates that VET has diminished standing in the student community and generally, there is little awareness of its purpose, or even its existence, among students. It is perceived as a 'second class' option, for the less academically gifted student.

VET Instructors tend to follow the 'traditional trades' segregation, dominated by males, and do not pro-actively encourage female participation.

WOMEN IN HIGH VIS: THE CURRENT STATE OF FEMALE WORKERS IN THE TRADE SECTOR

(Source: Women in high vis: The current state of female workers in the trade sector. Australian Careers Service 2019)

A number of surveys have revealed a pattern of many female students not being exposed to trade career pathways during their time at school. After the ATAR, a 2017 report into further education and employment by Year13, found that female respondents were hardly made aware of Vocational Education and Training (VET) or school-based apprenticeships during their secondary studies, unless it was in 'suitable' courses such as beauty or hairdressing. If female students were interested in trade pathways, they reported being heavily discouraged from pursuing them and even detailed facing extreme difficulty from their schools. It should be noted that many career advisors are not provided with the relevant information they need to pass onto interested students in the first place, making it hard for girls and women to break into their desired career path.

Breaking down stereotypes

It is fair to say that stigmas exist around not only women in trades, but also wider social perceptions of VET and what constitutes male and female work.

There is often a false assumption that women cannot keep up with the physical work required in trade occupations, but data has shown that women are on par and even outperforming their male counterparts in some industries. WGEA's⁶ Gender Equality Scorecard reflected that gender segregation is still rife in the Australian workforce – men feature disproportionately in the construction and mining industries, while women are over-represented in nursing and teaching.

A stereotype exists around the vocational sector in general, with many of the students surveyed in Year13's report noting that they didn't see apprenticeships and degrees as equal when it came to post-school education. Up to 74 per cent of students claimed that they would not consider an apprenticeship or traineeship after graduating, while many subscribe to the misconception that VET students earn less and have more trouble finding work than university graduates. These assumptions fail to recognise the ability and knowledge that is needed to complete trade work, especially as advanced technology enters the sector.

⁶ Workplace Gender Equality Agency

SCHOOL STUDENTS MAKING EDUCATION AND CAREER DECISIONS: ASPIRATIONS, ATTITUDES AND INFLUENCES

(Source: School Students Making Education and Career Decisions: Aspirations, Attitudes and Influences Final Report Prof Nola Alloway Dr Leanne Dalley A/Prof Annette Patterson Dr Karen Walker Mr Max Lenoy School of Education, James Cook University)

Vocational Education and Training in Schools Key Finding 1: *The formalised language or terminology of 'VET' was not commonly used in school sites and, as such, students and parents had a limited understanding of the term per se. When the concept was explained to – or 'named' for – the students however, they were able to identify and demonstrate an understanding of that which constitutes 'VET.' Many parents and students associated VET with TAFE colleges and studies. Principals and Career Advisers tended not to distinguish subjects as being – or not being – VET, preferring to refer to the subjects without labels, and thereby signalling their taking up of a non-specific, broad-based, curriculum approach.*

Key Finding 2: *There was a sense of valuing different pathways for students – of it being a case of 'horses for courses.' Principals, Career Advisers and parents perceived VET in a positive light and espoused the view that VET pathways provided valuable options for students. Many of the students also perceived VET in a positive way. The lower and middle SES students and the rural students, in particular, saw VET subjects as providing valuable qualifications, key links to vocational pathways, employment opportunities and access to life skills. While this was the case, many – who encompassed all geographical, gender and SES demographics – also voiced negative perceptions, experiences and suspicions of VET.*

Key Finding 3: *Generally, students, parents and Career Advisers shared the perception that VET was for the non-academically oriented student. Those enrolling in these subjects were sometimes referred to as "drop kicks," "drop outs" and "bludgers." VET subjects were generally seen – by students, Career Advisers and Principals – as less intellectually demanding and less emotionally stressful in that they were more likely taken for enjoyment and as a break from a more rigorous academic load than for any other reason by the majority of enrolled students. Additionally, many students were uncertain whether VET subjects counted towards the university entry score and tended to steer away from them because of this.*

PROMOTING THE VET SECTOR

Source: Developmental research for promotion of the Australian vocational education and training sector

Dr Fadil Pedic; Mary Dickie Michelle Yamine. Quay Connection: Benita Tan; Natalie Ellis GfK Australia March 2015

A 2015 re-examination of the higher education landscape and community, parent, employer and school careers counsellors' attitudes towards VET, shows that attitudes have shifted somewhat in a positive direction over the past decade; there is now slightly more acceptance of VET as a higher education option. However, the shift is still not adequate for VET to be a real choice for higher education for more than the segment of the population that is already VET-loyal, due to familial or peer exposure. The vast majority knows little about VET, and what they 'know' tends to be based upon negative perceptions, so that the likelihood of trial of this 'product' by new segments of higher education 'customers' is quite low.

PERCEPTIONS ARE NOT REALITY: myths, realities & the critical role of vocational education & training in Australia May 2017

Source: Skilling Australia Foundation 2017 Research & design by McCrindle. Citation: Wyman, N., McCrindle, M., Whatmore, S., Gedge, J. & Edwards, T. (2017). Perceptions are not reality: myths, realities & the critical role of vocational education & training in Australia; Skilling Australia Foundation, Melbourne, Australia.

'Sandwiched between debates about university deregulation and private vs public school funding, vocational education all too often is relegated to forgotten child status, struggling to gain the media attention required for the public to understand VET's unique abilities and ambitions. Further, the current overemphasis on academic and university pathways means VET pathways are often not given due consideration by high-school leavers...'

'...When compared with employment outcomes for university graduates, VET continues to produce superior results, and has proven itself to be a more flexible, accessible and adaptable platform for educating and skilling Australians than university education...'

'...Compared with university, VET is often considered the poor second cousin, seemingly receiving less positive attention in the media, among career counsellors and, significantly, with parents...'

- **Fact:** VET graduates earn wages comparable to, if not exceeding, that of university graduates
- **Fact:** VET graduates have a higher employment rate than undergraduates. More than 78% of VET graduates are employed after training⁸
- **Fact:** VET courses have adapted more readily to changing workforce needs

"Currently, shortages exist across a range of occupations and skill levels, including audiologists, civil draftspersons and technicians, optometrists, bricklayers, plasterers, chefs, and even hairdressers in some regional areas."

Globally, there is a trend towards skills-based hiring, rather than recruitment weighted strongly towards academic qualifications. Ernst and Young (EY) in the UK have now removed degrees from their hiring criterion, like Nestlé and Barclays who are also moving to contemporary skills and strengths-based recruitment.

Opportunities and Challenges

While there is recognition (within the VET sector) of inequities in the vocational system that create barriers and impediments for women who decide to seek a career in the trades, there are few initiatives in place to correct these injustices.

The VET system appears to be somewhat overwhelmed with focussing on threats to its operation, even survival (for example, other RTOs, Group Training Organisations, drop in apprenticeship numbers). There is opportunity to build a strategy that engages the VET sector / trainers with the objective of building an inviting environment for women, that heightens awareness of educators, students and their parents of the value of VET training, and that encourages employers to tap into the 'missing' workforce.

7. STATE / FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS

Observation:

- State, and particularly, Federal Government promises to deliver inequality for women entering male-dominated trades. Several 'initiatives' and programs are put in place through various agencies, none of which, to date (research demonstrates), have been particularly successful. While the objectives are well enunciated, the approach is on the whole, the same as when first established years ago. The thrusts that show the most potential are typically 'siloed', located into fragments within departments / agencies across the levels of government.

Funding also often hampers effective delivery, constrained budgets clipped by changing priorities. Of particular note, positive and practical assistance facilitating women who aspire to enter male-dominated / blue collar trades is overall, lacking.

INFORMATION ON GIRLS IN TRADES (Girls in Trades: NSW Government Initiative 2014)

Source: Girls in Trades and the Women in Trades initiative:
www.women.nsw.gov.au/women_and_work/women_in_trades

Women currently make up only 13% of trade apprentices and trainees in NSW, with most women opting to pursue apprenticeships in areas such as hairdressing and beauty therapy. Less than 2% of automotive, construction and electro-technology trade workers in NSW are female. The good news is that Australian women are entering male-dominated trades. In 2011 there were:

- 1,432 female electricians
- 676 female carpenters
- 931 female motor mechanics
- 638 female plumbers.

A non-traditional trade is one where women represent less than 25% of workers in that occupation. Some examples of non-traditional trades where women are under-represented include chefs (17%), electricians (2%), mechanics (less than 1%) and plumbers (less than 1%)

'... there are many ways in which you can explore trades while still at school, including:

- *attending career expos and information days*
- *visiting Mum or Dad's worksite*
- *studying a Vocational Education and Training (VET) or TAFE delivered HSC VET (TVET) course as part of the School Certificate or Higher School Certificate*
- *undertaking learning opportunities such as work experience or a work placement in a non-traditional trade*
- *enrolling in a pre-apprenticeship course or starting an apprenticeship or school based apprenticeship (you can combine school with paid employment and TAFE)*
- *trying a TAFE taster course. Drop in and discuss your interest in a trade career with your Careers Adviser. They have loads of information and are there to help...'*

In 2012 the New South Wales government launched its Women in Trades initiative to "increase the number of women working in male-dominated trades"... However, four years

on, the dwindling proportion of women in many trades suggests such strategies are not particularly effective.

The proportion of women Machinery Operators and Drivers also shrank from 14.1 per cent in 1995 to just 9.2 per cent in 2015.

Opportunities and Challenges

It is apparent that government initiatives and programs aimed at promoting the numbers of women entering the trades workforce sector have limited success, are not easily identified, or accessed. In many cases, the approach is passive. Government agencies appear to be adept at gathering information and statistical data, but seem to be less than capable to act upon the findings.

There is an urgent imperative for (a) coordination of every influencer who has the objective of increasing participation numbers, and (b) engaging levels of government in meaningful dialogue to build effective strategies, and (c) lobbying for sustained funding that will be used to best effect.

WOMEN AND THE CONSTRUCTION & ALLIED INDUSTRIES

Observation:

Research from multiple sources find that women face several impediments, challenges and barriers when aspiring to commence work, start an apprenticeship or take on a career in the 'male dominated trades' sector. None is more challenging than the building & construction and allied industries, which (a) have the lowest of employment levels of women, and the (b) lowest levels of retention of those who do make it.

There is no single or predominant reason for this state of being. Instead, it is a combination of factors prevailing in every aspect of the processes confronting women, particularly young women / school leavers who take up the challenge of entering these blue collar trade sectors.

THE FEMALE TRADIE SHORTAGE: WHY REAL CHANGE REQUIRES A MAJOR CULTURAL SHIFT June 2018

Authors: Donna Bridges Lecture of sociology, Charles Sturt University; Branka Krivokapic-Skoko

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Male domination of trades and trade courses in the automotive, construction, mining and energy sectors is entrenched above 95%, despite the substantial pay advantage compared to other trades such as hairdressing and hospitality.

Women make up just 3% of those employed in the electrotechnology and telecommunications trades, and only 1% of those working in construction, engineering and automotive trades.

Governments, industries and education providers have long tried to overcome skills shortages in the manual trades by encouraging more women to pursue these careers. But the gender imbalance remains entrenched due in part to a culture that resists diversity.

Quite simply, the manual trades are perceived to be masculine professions. This means that girls generally don't consider careers in these fields.

Moreover, many of their parents actively discourage them from doing so. They fear their daughters will be at risk in a male environment, that there is too much heavy lifting and dirty work.

Schools and other education facilities help to reinforce this gendered division of labour by sending mostly boys on school work experience programs.

What's driving this slow transformation is a growing belief that the industry is more profitable when there is diversity in the workforce. But much work remains to be done. For example, government and industry leaders need to develop stronger codes of etiquette to improve workplace culture in the manual trades.

The expectation that women should just try to "fit in" and "be one of the boys" also needs to change.

WHERE ARE THE FEMALE TRADIES? January 2015

Source: 'The Conversation': Karen Struthers Researcher, Griffith University

Why are the trades male dominated?

Research interviews with secondary school students (mostly females) and educators revealed that the "blokey" image of the trades continues to put off girls: "They are for the boys who don't do academic," was a common message.

Male domination of the manual trades is persistent and resistant to change – unlike the professions and management where women are breaking through the glass ceiling.

Gender segregation of the trades is attributed to:

- *Gender essentialist views that women are innately better nurturers and service workers and men are adept at physical and problem-solving skills. These views have been perpetuated through popular culture (particularly toys, TV and books) and reinforced by parents, peers, teachers and employers; and*
- *Past protection by employers and unionists, through industrial law, of the manual trades and higher pay for men.*

Many trades actively try to recruit girls and women, but due to these social stigmas and cultural norms, the recruitment pool is quite shallow.

Recruitment is only half the problem, though. Retention is another issue.

Women report that bullying, harassment, foul language and sexist jokes are common in the trades. Chauvinist attitudes are ingrained in many workplaces. Rumours that women only acquired their jobs through "sexual favours" or that they are receiving preferential treatment and need special allowances are persistent.

Some men also refuse to give women the same help they would offer their male colleagues, a problem that can be physically dangerous.

What's driving this slow transformation is a growing belief that the industry is more profitable when there is diversity in the workforce. But much work remains to be done. For example, government and industry leaders need to develop stronger codes of etiquette to improve workplace culture in the manual trades. The expectation that women should just try to "fit in" and "be one of the boys" also needs to change.

CONFERENCE AIMS TO BOOST NUMBER OF TRADESWOMEN BY CHALLENGING SEXIST ATTITUDES

Source: Supporting and Linking Tradeswomen (SALT) Sydney Conference 2019

A new report (Equal share of female managers on the horizon, but next century for CEOs by the (Australian Government) Workplace Gender Equality Agency) shows that the proportion of women working in Construction, Australia's most male-dominated industry, has fallen from 14.8 per cent in 1995 to 12 per cent in 2015.

Employer attitudes and workplace cultures also act as significant barriers, with almost half of employers surveyed for the report indicating they didn't think women were physically capable of doing the job, while 42 per cent believed women would require more support in training.

Significantly, almost every female apprentice who took part in focus group surveys said they had experienced bullying, discrimination or harassment on the job, though many were reluctant to report it out of fear of retribution.

Opportunities and Challenges

It is apparent from research that a 'new' approach must be taken to overcome multiple factors that discourage women's participation in the building & construction industry sector. Of particular importance is encouraging and facilitating sweeping changes in culture, attitudes and misconceptions that are embedded in every sphere of influence. This process must begin at an early age, removing gender bias, promoting parental encouragement and mandating a change in approach and levels of support in schools, from the earliest phase of education through to transition into a career or apprenticeship. A comprehensive, sustainable strategy with a multi-pronged approach, that is achievable and measurable, needs to be developed and implemented to finally bust the myths and misconceptions held, that actively discourage women from entering the building and construction trades sector.

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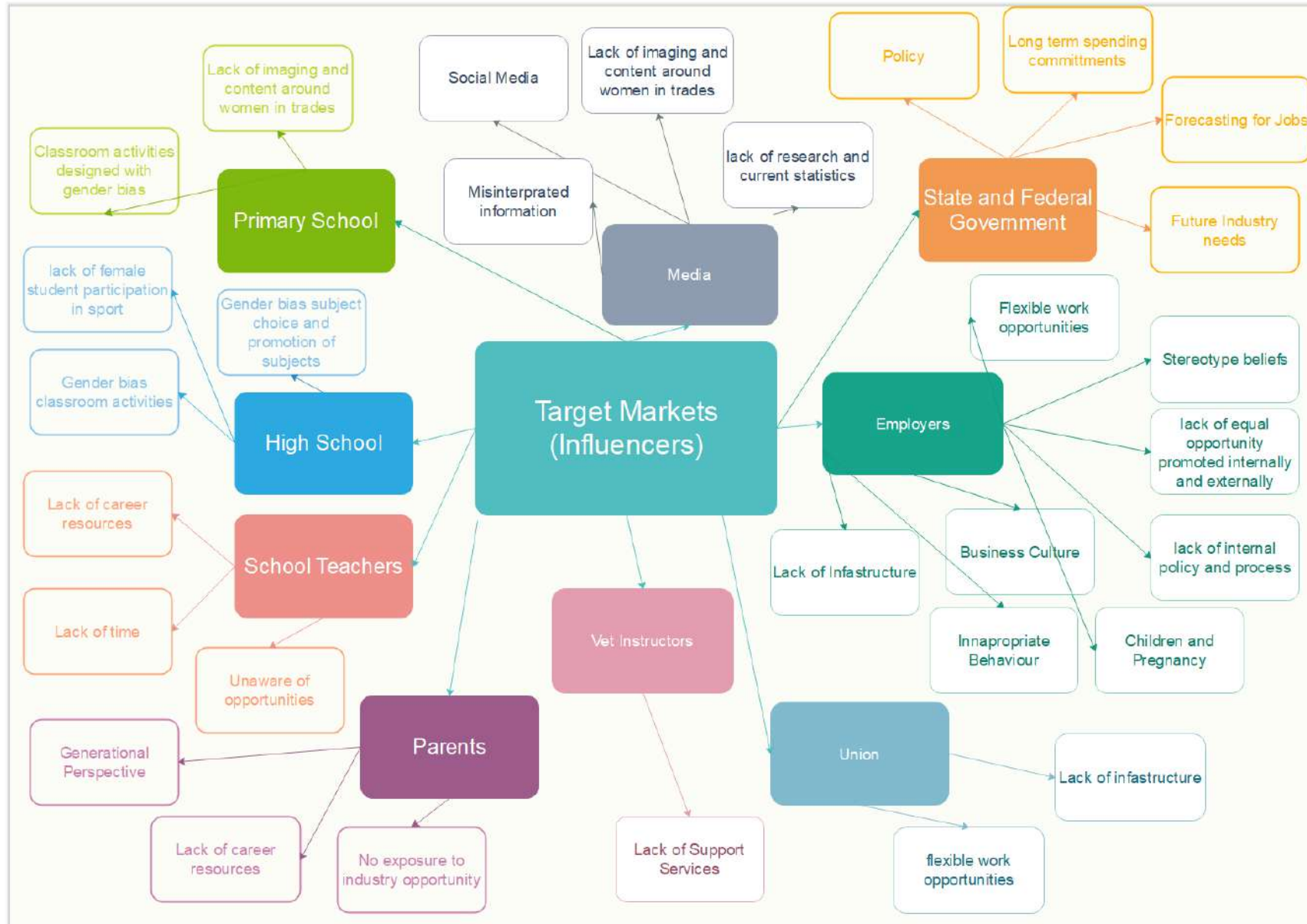
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