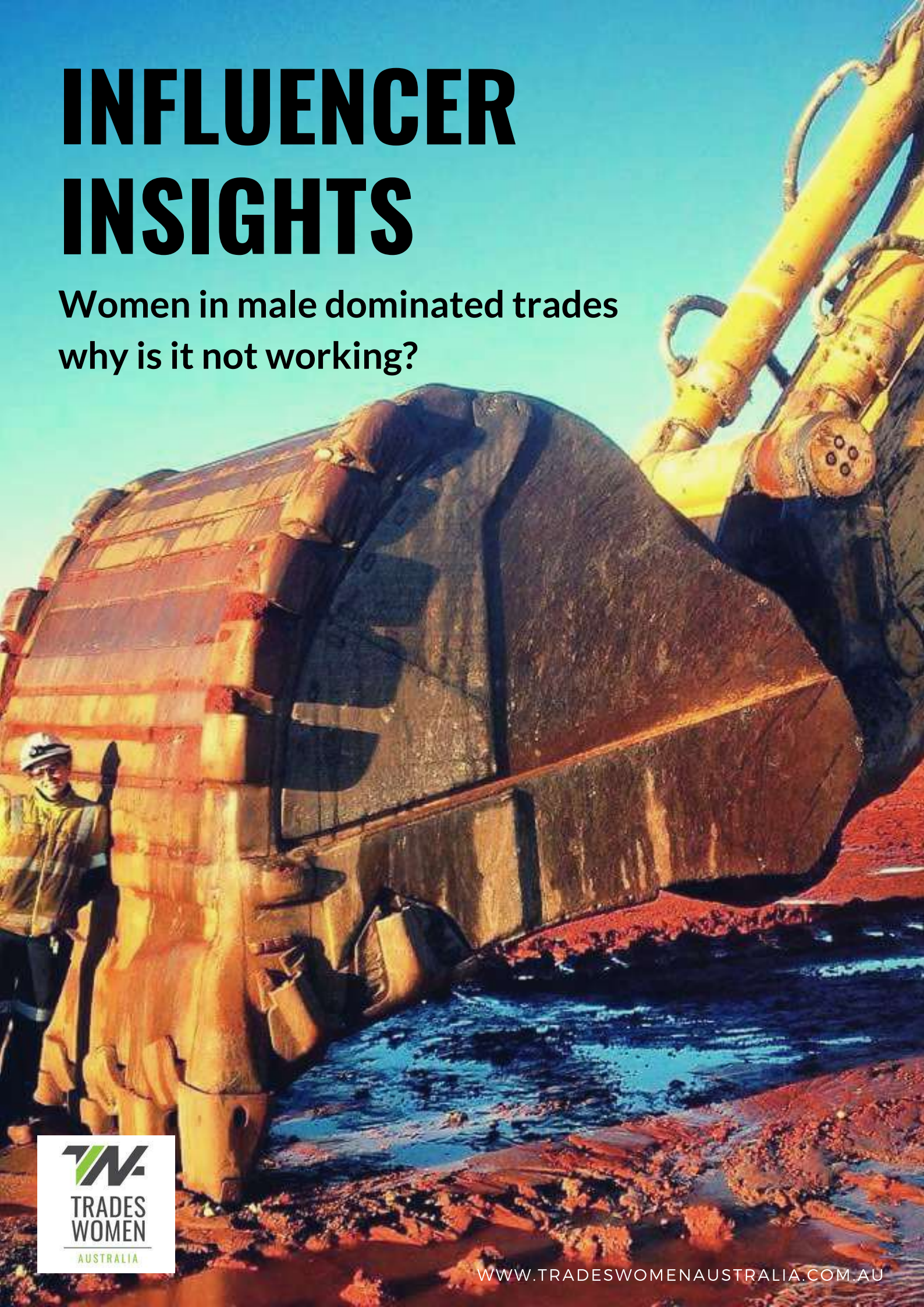


INFLUENCER INSIGHTS

Women in male dominated trades
why is it not working?



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PROGRAM

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A Tradeswomen Australia
Foundation Report
Developed by: Collective Impact
Consulting



DEFINITIONS

AEN | Apprenticeship Employment Network | Industry body

CIC | Collective Impact Consulting | Document Author

DET | Department of Education and Training

EBA | Enterprise Bargaining Agreement

ETU | Electrical Trades Union

MEGT | Melbourne East Group Training | Employer of Apprentices

MG | Monadelphous Group | Employer

NECA | National Electrical Communications Association | Employer

NIRODAH | Respectful Relationships Training Organisation

IBSA | Innovation and Business Skills Australia

VET | Vocational Education and Training

VCAL | Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning

VCE | Victorian Certificate of Education

TAFE | Technical and Further Education

TWA | Tradeswomen Australia Foundation

VACC | Victorian Automotive Chamber of Commerce

WPC | WPC Group | Employer of Apprentices

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research project was conducted to highlight the key barriers facing both women and employers in the engagement, recruitment and, retention of women in construction and civil skilled trade roles.

Tradeswomen Australia led the development and execution of this project with the support of Collective Impact Consulting and industry partners to provide direction in the development of a long-term change strategy focused on increasing the number of women in construction and civil skilled trade roles.

Over the past 20 years, engagement of women in such roles has sat around 3% with projects previously implemented having limited short term and no long-term impact. Current perceptions across a range of stakeholders are that this is because each project has focused on specific metrics rather than having a high-level collaborative approach.





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Employer & Industry Contributors:

Apprentice Employment Network | MEGT | Builders Academy Australia | NECA Education & Careers | Electrical Trades Union (Victoria) | Monadelphous Group | Nirodah | Geelong VCAL Cluster | In2work | Zinfra | IBSA | Skillinvest | VACC | MAS National | Apprenticeships Matter for Women | Molex | Schneider Electrical | WPC Group | Apprenticeships Group Australia | Nilson | Recips | Victorian State Government

Round Table attendees:

Thank you to the attendees for sharing their experiences.

Quotations from this Report

Employer Quotations

These quotations are observations from individuals who willingly contributed to this research in order to improve the engagement, recruitment and retention of women in trade. Thank you to the individuals who shared these observations.

Women in trades, Career advisers and parent Quotations

Quotations from these cohorts do not reference the individual to protect their identity. If you would like more information about these quotations, please contact the author.

DATA COLLECTION

THE ONLINE SURVEY

The online surveys involved 400 respondents who identified as people engaged in the building & construction industry either as an employee or employer. These surveys were used to obtain a greater snapshot of industry perceptions of women in construction and civil skilled trade roles.

Each survey focused on the personal perceptions of a range of barriers women face and included the perception of men employed in peer and supervisory roles within the building & construction industry. Summary data from the surveys have been used within this report to show key trends and industry perceptions on the barriers involved in the recruitment of women in construction and civil skilled trade roles.



THE FOCUS GROUPS

In order to allow for a more detailed understanding of the issues covered in the online survey, the following focus groups were conducted.

- 2 focus groups of 15 industry representatives including employers, TAFE and Australian apprenticeship support networks
- 1 focus group of 16 women working in male-dominated trades as either apprentices or qualified tradeswomen
- 1 focus group of 15 career advisers who are employed by secondary schools to provide post-secondary education and career advice to young people
- 1 focus group of 15 parents who have daughters aged between 16-18

Focus groups were conducted across Melbourne and Geelong which included partner organisations and randomly selected group participants. The focus groups were semi-structured, with a series of conversation topics. This report is a summary report identifying the key themes and findings from the focus groups on topics including the barriers on the engagement, recruitment and retention of women in building & construction skilled trade roles. The conclusions, and quotes from people who participated in the research have been incorporated throughout this report.

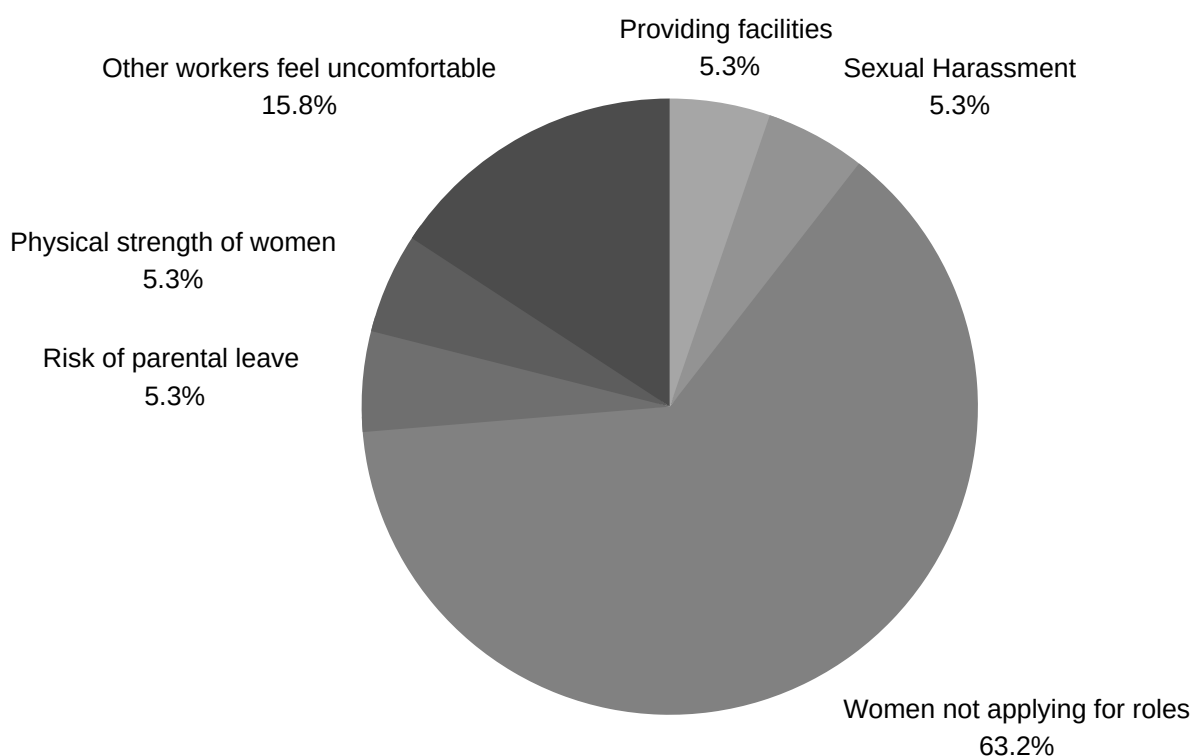
FINDINGS

INDUSTRY

The data collected demonstrates industry is open to the employment of women in male-dominated workplaces. Though, there is a disconnect between what employers perceive the barriers to increasing women's employment are and what women perceive the barriers to employment are. Feedback from employer surveys and round tables showed that employers believe the lack of women applying for roles is because skill-based trades are not being promoted as viable career paths for women during high school.

The data also showed employers expect that women present the same behaviours as men (increased confidence and relaxed appearances for example, dressed in trade attire) when engaging, applying and interviewing for employment opportunities.

Biggest barrier for businesses employing women



ENGAGEMENT

"Parents go to open days with their children for university but not open days for TAFE/Trade or Careers Expos as these see the children taken by their high school" (*Nirodah*)

"There has been an issue in the media and within. Big contractors experience backlash from parent's if jobs are advertised only for women. Parents have called and complained the same opportunity isn't available for their sons" (*Zinfra*)

"The message continues to be negative because women are not being successful through the initial stages of recruitment, they can apply for lots of roles and not receive feedback. When they aren't successful, they will tell their friends and the message continues" (*In2work*)

"There are limited faces for women in trades, ambassadors are needed, if you can't see it, you can't be it" (*Builders Academy Australia*)

"Careers councillors and Parents are actively discouraging students from moving into trades due to the perception that you don't need to be skilled - "you're too smart" (*MG*)

"There is an ongoing perception around tradespeople not being well paid, this is driven by the lack of understanding or explanation of apprentice wages and the opportunities post apprenticeship " (*Molex*)

"Career advisers do not have the resources, time or knowledge available to promote career paths in trade" (*MEGT*)

RECRUITMENT

"More female applicants apply later in life which creates an issue due to adult apprenticeship wages for apprentices over 21" (*WPC Group*)

"We don't advertise any of our positions; applicants send us their resumes, but we don't have any women applying - (*Nilsen*)

"Recruiters think they are helping women with comments like "I am doing her a favour by not putting her into that environment or that culture" (*WPC Group*)

"A barrier is the wives of small business owners not feeling comfortable about having women in their husband's business" (*MAS National*)

"Recruiters are overlooking applicants because of their physical size, appearance and gender" (*NECA Education & Career*)

"Employers may raise concern with the longevity of female employees, what if they get pregnant ? need parental leave etc" (*DET*)

"There is bias involved in the recruitment, "can women do 8 hours of manual labour" (*AEN*)

"Smaller business don't want to employ women because there is a perceived risk if a man and woman are alone 1:1" (*Nirodah*)

"Employers getting burnt because they have had women in trade roles that haven't worked out -(*WPC Group*)

Not having stranded women or isolated women - 30% of women needed for support networks (more than one needed)" (*Schneider*)

"Educating male employers that it is okay to say no if the woman is not right for the job" (*Molex*)

"Traditional notions that women are not as strong, can't tough it out, can't stand up to the boys are all definitely spoken about during our recruitment process. But, many of these attitudes are slowly changing across time."

- Employer Survey

RETENTION

"Bad culture – no female toilets, not feeling value to the team, no access to flexibility" (*Nirodah*)

"Bad language, It's the Australian way of hanging shit" (*NECA Education & Career*)

"Women miss opportunities because there are assumptions on their achievements and what they can or can't do" (*Zinfra*)

"These days people stay in jobs about 4 years and move around" (*NECA Education & Career*)

"There are no female toilets available for women - Shared facilities on some worksites" (*WPC Group*)

"Inappropriate behaviour on the work site is more noticeable amongst younger men, Sometimes older workers will pull them into line" (*Schneider*)

"They have saturated mentors across apprenticeships ... There are too many touch points" (*MEGT, MAS National, NECA Education & Careers*)

"We are doing the whole thing poorly - only 50% of apprenticeships are completing" (*AEN*)

"Early warning signs are not being picked up early enough and the early warning signs are there before they drop out" (*AEN*)

"Mental Health, substance abuse issues come up all the time with young people" (*AEN*)

"Mentors are ticking and flicking" (*MEGT*)

"People are not held accountable for their actions" (*Schneider*)

"Massive issue that TAFE doesn't support people and boys are not being kept in line" (*MG*)

"Women are isolated when they aren't there in numbers especially when people are remote" (*MG*)

"Culture, Culture, Culture It is a huge problem across all levels fo industry" (*Apprenticeships Matter for Women*)

87% of women surveyed believed they had been discriminated against in their current role due to their gender



FINDINGS

CAREER ADVISERS

The cohort of career advisers within the public school sector (VET, VCAL & VCE) demonstrated support for women entering into a career path within the trade industry. Feedback from the career adviser round table showed an understanding of trade pathways and an understanding of how those pathways would suit a woman entering trades.

Career advisers believe the barrier comes from the parents and parents lack engagement with the trade industry and employment opportunities.

There are many opportunities for students to commence vocational training through VET in schools, School-based apprenticeships and the Headstart program. These programs are designed to support a young person transition from high school into vocational education.

Schools face barriers when implementing these programs for students. To meet the needs of an employer or a training provider the school must review each individual students timetabling, the flexibility of working days, access to transport, homework and extracurricular commitments.

Another theme that was clear through the round table was the impact of the under-representation of women within trade-based roles in the imagery depicted from training providers advertising VET and trade based opportunities. Often career expos are not staffed by tradespeople with lived experiences, particularly tradeswomen.

ENGAGEMENT

"It is seen as a male domain, they count themselves out before they give it a chance"

"Most men are tradies but they don't see themselves in their role because there are no female examples"

"Women don't have peers in the workplace"

"There is no liaison with careers teachers at a year 9/10 level, by the time they are in years 11 & 12 it is too late" "There is some unconscious bias in place based on gendered roles when referring young women into career paths"

"There are no role models for young women"

"There need to be more female teachers in space within the TAFE sector because TAFE is also very male dominated"

"Female only schools are not exposed to hand tasks"

"There needs to be exposed to primary aged schools to trades for both boys and girls"

"There is no understanding of trades across the board with school students. They think you can be a sparky, plumber or chippy, that's it and it's for me."

"Parents are pushing children into university"

"Grade 5 & 6 are exposed to hand skills in P-12 schools, this doesn't happen in separated schools"

"Go around to schools and teach trades to girls – jobs you can do at home"

"Doesn't matter where you go because all the imagery is men"

"There is no understanding between employers and career advisers – School-based apprentices are a great way to work across the employers and schools"

RECRUITMENT

"They don't want to be a part of a male-dominated the industry due to the influence of men in the classroom"

"They need to be really strong willed to keep applying for jobs and getting knocked back"

"Larger companies are more supportive of women if an apprentice works with a small company you are going to cop shit"

"There are some larger employers that are specifically asking for women"

RETENTION

"Apprentices and employees are treated badly by employers when it is 1:1 with a sole trader. They need to do something about teaching employers about language, their attitudes and bullying - This is the same with boys"

"There are often women that come from low socioeconomic areas who are interested in trades because they are exposed to trades but they are judged because of their background and being a female."

"It is considered completely okay from the top down for young women (high school aged) to be wolf-whistled in the workplace, there are sites where the boss does it so everyone else does."

"Young people are looking for options and live in a world where everything changes so quickly. They are reluctant to sign on to 4-year contract of training - They are not willing to commit because they want to travel/work before they settle down"

"It is really hard to have females in the industry teaching because there are no women working in the trade"

"Sexism on the site can be so bad that women in senior or supervisors roles are struggling to deal with men in other trades as there is a lack of respect - they are ignoring the women and overstepping them to talk to senior men or even junior staff"

"Skilled tradespeople are struggling to get higher paid jobs"

"Apprentices don't have the level of respect or understanding of hard work, they don't want to get dirty"

When you're not regarded as one of the blokes or a mate of anyone you're open to getting semi-sexualised - The first few months are really hard because you don't have the support network when you're trying to know people and make friends at work.

- Female Apprentice



FINDINGS

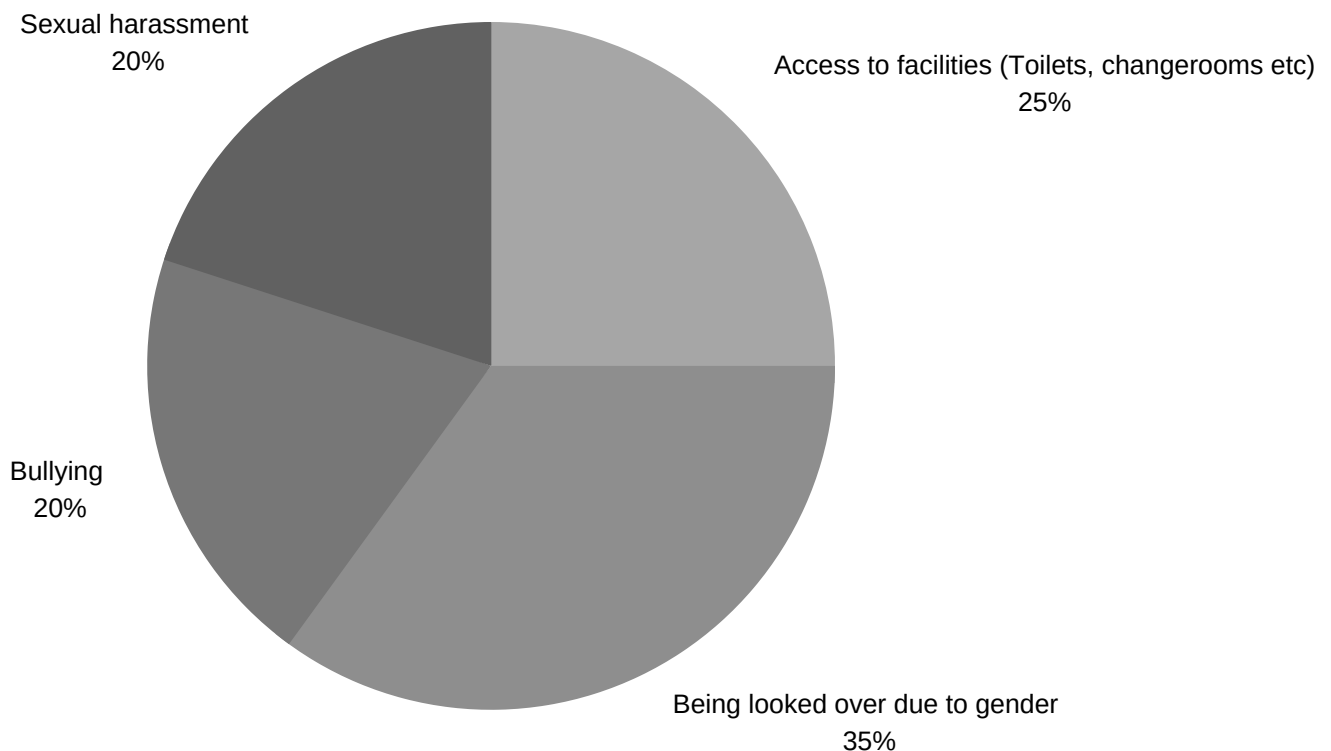
TRADESWOMEN

Women's views on the opportunities available to them and other women in male-dominated trades were polarised dependent on the age and experience of the tradeswoman. Younger and less experienced tradeswomen said they found it hard to break into the industry. Once employed apprentices (female and male) reported issues about the culture of work sites and the impact this had on retention. As tradeswomen increased in age and experience they felt their gender had a negative impact on the longevity of their career. Many women reported a lack of and/or difficulty accessing promotions and leadership opportunities.

75% of women reported discrimination and bias in the workplace due to their gender.

During the round tables and surveys, many women mentioned work sites did not provide suitable facilities for women. Some of the women mentioned they needed to change in their car after work because only male change rooms were available.

Biggest barrier for women in trade



ENGAGEMENT

"The teacher favoured the boys in the building class at secondary school, I lost out on learning opportunities"

When you were a young child you never saw female builders or cartoons like "Bobette the builder"

"A 13-year-old girl experiencing puberty is facing a lot of self doubt, How can you even consider a career that may affect confidence levels"

"Women are positioned as objects"

"Bunning's pink tool kits are stereotyping women and their roles"

"Parents and teachers discourage students from doing trades"

"Trades are perceived as the "dumb career path"

"Trades are seen as a year 10 drop out option"

"My Career Adviser was supportive and helped me get an apprenticeship"

RECRUITMENT

"I was lacking Self-awareness and confidence to be me"

"I want to feel safe in the workplace"

"Women are there and they want to work but employers don't want to hire them"

"I've applied for so many roles and been told I don't have the experience and a guy is given the role that has less years experience than me"

"Employers are making it hard to apply for jobs by making jobs seem they are too hard to apply for"

"Does the union represent men and women the same? No"

"I contacted my union for help, Because I am a women in trade I got palmed off to another women working in electrical not the department"

"So many men don't want to employ women because they fear sexual harassment, so it is too hard"

"Perceived vs real sexual harassment and violence needs to be educated"

RETENTION

"I was trying to be one of the boys because I wasn't confident enough to be me"

"Because I was swearing and being assertive, he called me a butch dike"

"CULTURE is why women are not retained in trade" – note all women at round table agreed

"There is a lack of mentoring and buddy systems"

"Mentoring works really well"

"No opportunities for career progression prevent women from staying with a business"

"Employers don't acknowledge women"

"It is really hard to make friends in the trade because everyone presumes that you're a woman you want to "fuck them" you don't want to be friends"

"Some men don't want to be friends with women in trades because they fear the perception other colleagues will have"

"Men feel they can't have women as a friend"

"Women tell their husband not to employ women, because there is a fear they will steal their husbands"

"The perception that women are in the trade for the wrong reason"

"I walked passed a guy and he was laughing about another girl on site saying I saw Jo and Michael are really close, bet you they are fucking"

"Women want a safe and welcoming workplace" – all women at round table agreed

"Getting a female toilet was great and I felt really accepted"

"We had one toilet at work with hundreds of workers, we had to ban men from pooping because they take too long"

"Men are not thinking about how women will feel in their workplace"

"Workplace satisfaction for all workers is important to get the culture right"

"Better mental health will happen if the workplace culture is right"

"Culture can't work unless the leaders are on board"

"After motherhood, it was really hard to get back in the trade"

"When I was an apprentice working for a Group Training Provider I was placed on site with a particular employer but, before I even got on site the employer and union called a meeting to prevent me from gaining access"

FINDINGS

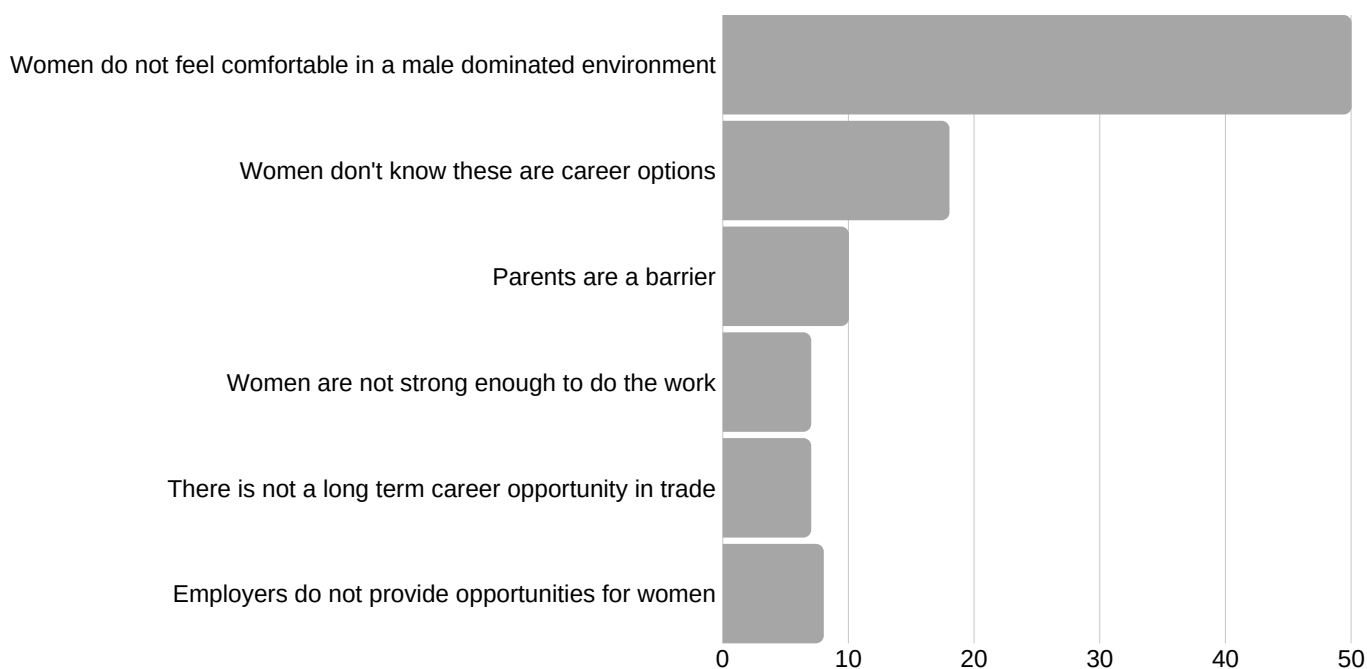
PARENTS

The parents round table showed a lack of knowledge when it comes to having conversations with their children in regards to trade roles regardless of gender. Collectively as a group if they or their families hadn't been involved in trades their knowledge of career options was very limited and based around domestic maintenance trades as this was their only exposure.

Key reasons parents hadn't explored the options of trades with their daughters was due to a perception that it was a man's role and the culture and attitudes on construction sites.

Outside of the engagement, there were limited responses due to the participants having limited exposure to trades.

Why do you think young women are not engaging in male-dominated trades?



“There is a huge issue with the culture of worksites – People don’t want their children exposed to porn, sexual harassment and no facilities”

ENGAGEMENT

"I have never really thought of it as an option, I don't know what transferable skills there are in the trade, or even what you need to know to be good at a trade"

"I think if my daughter raised it I would encourage her to do university then trade after"

"We have quite a few tradesmen in our family so it's definitely an option - I just don't think it would be something she would want to do"

"School really promotes university, trades are seen as an option for people that drop out of school"

"Back when I went to school everyone went into the trade - There wasn't the prestige with the university"

"I don't know the pathway to go into the trade so couldn't have an informed conversation about it"

"Daughters are less exposed to 'handyman' skills when they are young, my son's always worked with their dad on stuff rather than my daughter"

"Looking back there is a lot of things I have said to my son and daughter that really set them up to think that jobs had genders"

RECRUITMENT

"I don't know if employers would be open to employing women in skilled roles, I often see the lollipop girls and I worry that it's just a token placement so people see them"

"I wouldn't know what roles are there or how my daughter would apply for them outside of what is listed on seeking"



RETENTION

"It would be really hard in a workplace where you are the only female"

"I don't know how true it is but you hear a lot of stories about sexual harassment and bullying on construction sites"

"I don't think there is much support for women in the workplace. It would be good if parental leave was part of their EBA (if it's not already)"

ROUND TABLE SUMMARY

Barrier discussed	Employer	Women	Schools	Parents
Lack of female role models or mentors in the workplace	X	X	X	X
No promotion of career progression opportunities	X	X	X	X
Do not receive positive feedback/ lack of acknowledgement		X		
The man's world culture	X	X	X	X
It is hard to make friends in the workplace because co-workers fear you		X	X	
Being a poster girl is a lot of pressure for an apprentice		X		
Poor leadership, no follow through on gender equity policies and procedures		X	X	
No female toilets - lack of infrastructure	X	X	X	X
No parental or carers leave	X	X	X	X
Porn on the walls and language used onsite is sometimes uncomfortable	X	X	X	X
Lack of uniforms and safety gear in women's sizes	X	X	X	X
No "safe space" on the worksite	X	X		
Pressure to fit into a "Boys Club" environment		X	X	X
Employers need to be educated on how to say "No" to women	X			
Lack of flexible work	X		X	
Small business cannot afford diversity advisors	X			
No industry support for gender equity advice	X		X	
Women put too much pressure on themselves to prove their skills	X			X
Lack of key influencers and leadership in industry supporting and changing workplace culture	X	X		X
Mangers are too busy to pick up on issues with Apprentices	X		X	
Men uncomfortable mentoring women in the workplace	X			X
Culture at TAFE is can be sexist and uncomfortable	X		X	X
Prevalence of bullying and harassment on site	X	X	X	X
Wives of workers feel threatened with husbands having a woman on site	X	X		
Women cannot work when they are pregnant	X			

THEMES

ENGAGEMENT

Pathways

Direct influencers of young women (parents and grandparents) are unclear of career pathways and progression opportunities for women in trade industries. This influenced them in directing the young woman towards university where a clearer career path is perceived.

Youth Engagement

Outside of engagement through career expo's and open days there was little done to directly engage with young women through a medium they were using (smartphones, social media etc) There reduced the visibility of trade being a tangible career option for women due to lack of exposure outside of family or domestic maintenance engagement.

Skilled Training

Across influencer groups, there was a consistent conversation that young women were less likely to be exposed to 'tool skills' and the completion of tickets required to access and work on construction sites. The reasoning was due to limited numbers of young women undertaking trade based modules during VCE and VCAL and having a lack of understanding about Pre-Apprenticeships and their benefits.

RECRUITMENT

Bias (Conscious & Unconscious)

Many employers believed they were offering the same opportunities to young men and women without understanding the differences men and women have when approaching a recruitment process. This often led employers not to advertise positions as apprenticeships and roles were filled through word of mouth referrals (sporting clubs, families) or by people contacting the business directly through a generic email address.

Culture

The perception of the hyper-masculine culture was of concern for parents of young women as they would prefer a workplace environment where they were confident that young woman would be safe rather than the unknown. This was a theme echoed by employers but from the perspective not recruiting them into roles if they didn't fit the current culture of the worksite or didn't present in a way where the employer felt they would be able to 'hold their own' on a work site'. This was further supported by tradeswomen stating they felt the need to defeminise how they presented themselves on in the workplace.

Education & Understanding

Outside of Tier 1 contractors, there was limited knowledge of how it initiates processes internally that would drive cultural and process change to support gender equality

RETENTION

Mentors

Across all groups, there was a view that mentor interventions implemented across state and federal government initiative had been saturated especially within the group training model. Mentors currently operating within the apprenticeship framework provide support services for apprentices but many believe these are currently being delivered through a 'tick and flick' method as there is no deep engagement. Current mentors in place are also predominately male and unable to provide the style of mentoring and support young women require. They are also not provided with skill training outside of the trade to enable them to engage with young people and support them with the mental health support required.

Culture

There is a clear issue (for all employees) due to the hyper-masculine culture that has perpetuated male-dominated industries. This is driving a prevalence of bullying, harassment and discrimination. Although much has been done to educate employees on these issues the change in culture is slow and this is alienating young women and driving career influencers to steer them towards other careers even when after they have been employed in a trade based role.

Access to Facilities

The facilities on sites are being designed with a gendered lens due to a lack of female engagement in this process. Feedback from women was that many sites have limited (if any) access to female facilities including change rooms, toilets etc. Women also commented that as the percentage of women working in trade increased the need for a return to work facilities for mothers will increase.

RECOMMENDATIONS

ENGAGEMENT

Pathways

Recommendation 1.1:

Development and distribution of pathways maps for all trade based roles including 'white collar' roles available across the industry. These would need to be made available across a range of platforms to ensure exposure.

Youth Engagement

Recommendation 1.2:

Development and distribution of video content to showcase women of a variety of ages and backgrounds working in trade-based roles that can be used across a range of platforms by all influencers.

Recommendation 1.3:

Development of engaging content that provides young women with 'lived' exposure to job roles and tasks within skilled trade roles to enable young women the opportunity to experience and connect when they might not otherwise have exposure.

Recommendation 1.4:

Creation of role modules through a social media influencer model which will see young women exposed to people championing trades and publicly endorsing them as a long term career option.

Recommendation 1.5:

Development and distribution of online and print content that can be used to engage with young women during career formation stages.

Recommendation 1.6:

Focused pre-employment training to provide young women with the skills and knowledge required to navigate male-dominated industries and build an understanding of third party support resources if bullying, discrimination or sexual harassment occurs.

Skilled Training

Recommendation 1.7:

Focused pre-employment training to coach young women on presentation requirements of resumes and in interviews. This would include workshopping transferable skills, building confidence in their skills and knowledge and building an understanding of the industries recruitment practices.

Recommendation 1.8:

Implementation of female-specific pre-apprenticeships to provide an environment where women are not competing for support or attention of the trainer and are provided with an environment where they can build their confidence.

RECRUITMENT

Bias (Conscious & Unconscious)

Recommendation 2.1:

Training to be developed for industry to build awareness of bias (conscious and unconscious) through the recruitment process.

Culture

Recommendation 2.2:

Implementation of Gender Equality Officers that are endorsed/promoted by industry associations to support Small & Medium contractors with the development and implementation of gender equality processes.

Education & Understanding

Recommendation 2.3:

Implementation of female-specific pre-apprenticeships to provide an environment where women are not competing for support or attention of the trainer and are provided with an environment where they can build their confidence.

Recommendation 2.4:

Focused pre-employment training to coach young women on presentation requirements of resumes and in interviews. This would include workshopping transferable skills, building confidence in their skills and knowledge and building an understanding of the industries recruitment practices.

RETENTION

Mentors

Recommendation 3.1:

Training to be developed for workplace supervisors to upskill them to manage and triage basic mental health problems, bullying and harassment that arise with employees.

Recommendation 3.2:

Female trade mentors implemented to support women working in the trade. Female mentors will need to work in partnership with employers and supervisors to ensure a consistent level of support and messaging

Culture

Recommendation 3.3:

Education programs developed and implemented for workplaces to combat bias, bullying and sexual harassment and build gender equitable workplaces.

Recommendation 3.4:

Employer champion program to provide a platform of advocates for gender equality and role models for senior leaders in the industry.

Access to facilities

Recommendation 3.5:

Development and implementation of best practice guides to support employers to create gender equitable workplaces.

TWA brings industry and tradespeople together to create awareness and support for women working in the male dominated trade industry.



**TRADES
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