

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP PROJECT

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1. Executive Summary

During the first half of 2007 the Australian Women's Coalition (AWC) undertook the Women's Leadership Program project to explore aspects of Australian women's leadership in paid and voluntary work, identified as a relevant issue by the AWC and the Office for Women. The project aimed to identify:

- best practice for recruiting, developing and retaining women leaders;
- positive and negative aspects of informal and formal leadership programs;
- how women transfer leadership skills learnt in voluntary work to paid work, and vice versa.

Women tend to lead fragmented working lives in paid and voluntary sectors due to their primary "caring" responsibilities within families. Despite heavy commitments to work and family, many women belong to a number of voluntary organisations and their contributions in all these areas should be acknowledged and valued. Their continual balancing of responsibilities for family, work and community require women-focused and flexible work and training programs.

Skills learned in paid and voluntary work enrich one another and are applied in both areas in an ongoing process of cross-fertilisation. The capacities women bring from business and professional areas into voluntary organisations, and processes such as strategic planning and financial management, are transforming these organisations.

Women bring particular qualities to their leadership, most commonly a relational form of leadership that is non-hierarchical, consultative, affirming and encouraging of others. Women themselves and their capacities for leadership flourish through encouragement, trust and affirmation. Capacities for relational leadership are transferred to and benefit women's paid workplaces, alongside the many skills and networks women transfer from their experience in voluntary organisations.

In general women's voluntary organisations are not well-resourced to develop the capacity of their current and future leaders. This is a major barrier to women retaining leadership roles, as they shoulder financial costs to meet their leadership commitment, often amounting to tens of thousands of dollars annually.

Gender and cultural discrimination are still systemic barriers to leadership encountered routinely by women.

Factors needed to recruit, develop and retain women leaders

- Affirming, encouraging environments
- Opportunities
- Women's willingness and commitment
- Training
- Resources and support
- Succession planning and career paths
- Flexible, responsive and family-friendly organisations
- Getting something back
- The satisfaction of contributing
- Clarity

Barriers to leadership

Barriers to women taking on and retaining leadership positions:

- Finances and time needed for leadership commitments
- Distance
- Disability and ill-health (one's own and that of family members)
- Discrimination, both gender and racial/cultural
- Lack of support from family and partner
- Lack of child care

Women's Leadership Programs

In addition to networking and mentoring opportunities, formal training programs in women's organisations consisted of:

1. training days for the whole leadership team/board;
2. programs building the capacity, skills and networks of members;
3. induction and mentoring for new members and/or new leaders;
4. formal mentoring programs open to members;
5. ongoing professional quality leadership programs.

Most organisations funded and resourced their own training programs and trainers gave their time and skill voluntarily. Lack of external funding was the major factor limiting the range, quality, sustainability and style of training.

Women found formal and informal training invaluable for skills development, confidence and self-esteem. An all female environment was an important aspect for many women. Courses in public speaking, listening skills, negotiation and dealing with conflict were also useful. Networking and mentoring were important, and many women learned from observing successful women.

Recommendations

What the business sector can do

- Work with government to create information and induction packages for women who are considering becoming members of corporate boards;
- Corporate Boards should encourage women to join by recognising women's prior and on the job learning within community leadership positions;
- Build alliances with women's organisations and in partnership with them develop ways of resourcing their leadership programs;
- Develop family-friendly policies and practices, including child care facilities, flexible hours and paid maternity and family leave.

What governments can do

- Make funding available to build organisational capacity and resource training for organisations' present and future leaders;
- Enhance strategies promoting women's equal opportunities, recognising and developing more effective responses to gender and racial/cultural discrimination;
- Resource and develop women's educational opportunities, including re-training programs, in tandem with good-quality affordable and accessible child-care;
- Establish a partnership with business and women's voluntary sectors to develop more flexible and family-friendly workplaces.

What the AWC and women's organisations can do

- Work in partnership with the Office for Women to establish a registered national women's leadership training and mentoring body or alliance.
- Share information about their training programs, so that successful programs can be adopted and adapted by other organisations;
- Share and co-facilitate formal training programs; including (where appropriate) regular training days for office-bearers/leaders followed by mentoring;
- Develop induction packages and/or sessions for new members and new leaders, including written specifications for leadership positions;
- Develop "buddy" systems for new members and leaders;
- Establish shared facilities with other organisations for tele-conferencing, on-line mentoring and training: remote learning facilities, technicians, laptops;
- Identify, nurture and mentor potential leaders, offering a leadership career path within an overall succession plan;
- Consider a range of strategies to attract and retain younger women, e.g. changed meeting times and formats, co-leadership roles, issue-based programs.

The AWC welcomes opportunities to work with government, business and women's sectors on these recommendations.

2. Background

The Australian Women's Coalition (AWC) is one of four national women's secretariats working in partnership with the Commonwealth Office for Women. It is a consortium of 20 national women's non-government organisations formed to strengthen networking between women's organisations, develop policies of benefit to women and enable a stronger voice for women in the community.

During the first half of 2007 the AWC undertook the Women's Leadership Program project to explore aspects of Australian women's leadership in paid and voluntary work. This was identified as a relevant issue by the AWC and the Office for Women. It has become pertinent in the current climate in which non-government organisations eligible for government funding are required to develop structures for appropriate governance and financial accountability. Women taking up leadership positions in these organisations are expected to have the skills to ensure high levels of organisational performance and accountability.

The project investigated pathways of women's leadership as well as leadership programs, which included formal structured programs, mentoring programs, and networking opportunities. The project was designed to:

- explore women's pathways to leadership in both paid and voluntary work within Australian communities.
- gather information on formal and informal leadership training, through examining
 - programs run by member organisations of the four secretariats,
 - women's experiences of informal and formal training throughout their voluntary and paid careers.

The project aimed to identify

- Best practice for recruiting, developing and retaining women leaders.
- Positive and negative aspects of informal and formal leadership programs
- How women transfer leadership skills learnt in voluntary work to paid work, and vice versa.

3. Methodology

Several methods were used to gather data.

1. A survey was sent to all member organisations of the four secretariats asking information about their women's leadership programs, how they are conducted and funded, the number of participants, how participants and leaders are selected, the most and least successful aspects of the programs, and ways in which they might be enhanced (see Appendix 4).
2. Interviews were conducted with up to three graduates of each leadership program(s) by a representative from each member organisation using set questions. These focused on participants' view of the most and least useful aspects of the program, how the program had/had not assisted them in ongoing leadership, and their suggestions for improvements (see Appendix 4).
3. Representatives from each AWC member organisation were asked to conduct interviews with six successful women leaders from their organisation, using set questions. Three of these were to be held with women who first developed their leadership skills in voluntary positions and transferred these to their paid work, and three with leaders who first developed their skills in paid work, and transferred these to voluntary positions. 72 summarised interviews were received for analysis (see Appendix 3).
4. On review of the data collected by the three methods detailed above, further questions were developed and five focus groups held, mainly of representatives of AWC member organisations. These included women who had responded to individual interviews, but as focus group questions concentrated on more detailed exploration, this did not replicate previous data, and was taken into account in the data analysis. One focus group consisted of four participants from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, and provided information about immigrant groups not adequately covered in individual interviews (see Appendix 5).
5. Two in-depth semi-structured interviews were held with women leaders, one of whom was an Indigenous woman, to gather more in-depth data in the form of "case studies" and consider specific circumstances.
6. A form was sent out to participants for demographic information. As these were on the whole kept separate from the other data collection methods, the information gathered cannot be correlated closely with data from the other methods (see Appendix 6).

Apart from the survey (see point 1 above) and demographic data (see 6 above), interviewers took notes of interviews and sent these to the project officer for analysis. All interviewees were given consent forms to read and sign. Summaries of individual interviews and focus groups were analysed and themes identified and correlated.

4. Women's Leadership: Findings

How do women understand 'leadership'?

Approaching the subject generally from their experience of being leaders or from observing others in the role, women outlined a number of different understandings of leadership. Many women saw it as complex and multi-faceted and most described a combination of several forms of leadership. One respondent described women's leadership as dynamic and changing over time. Women's capacity to take on leadership positions certainly changed in response to their family and work commitments and their life cycle. A number of respondents reflected that different forms of leadership are needed in voluntary organisations compared to professional or business contexts, where leadership or management may have a more specific function. There was also recognition that leadership exists on many levels. Nevertheless a number of forms and/or understandings of leadership could be distinguished.

The born leader or the developing leader

A small number of women saw good leaders as born, with the capacity to lead being a "personality trait". They described their leadership as happening "naturally", themselves as "bossy", "strong", a "mover and a shaker".

By contrast, a larger number of women believed that good leadership was learned and cultivated, and that women developed their abilities and skills in response to encouragement, opportunities and good training.

The visionary

A small number of women described leadership as visionary, in which the leader holds the vision, "looks to where the organisation is heading", points the way, and is passionate about the organisation's goals.

The entrepreneur

The entrepreneurial aspect of leadership was emphasised by a small number of women who described the leader as an innovator, an initiator, a lateral thinker, identifying and implementing ideas. This style of operating sometimes appeared to mark a more individual approach, where creative leaders nevertheless developed and employed wide networks to help them realise their innovative projects. Being an initiator sometimes involved risk-taking. Innovative approaches could be combined with teamwork as evidenced by the interviewee who loved the "creation of new directions from a lot of people focussing on an issue".

The organiser

The planning and organising aspect was emphasised by some, who saw themselves as "a meticulous planner", or a "people organiser".

The representative

A particular aspect of leadership was to represent and speak for a specific community of interest, advocating and influencing on its behalf. This could become more complex when organisations represented a number of communities and/or points of view, where leaders needed to allow different views to be voiced, and represent these. This form of leadership was particularly described by CALD women, who spoke of feeling as though they continually carry the banner for migrant women. They found that this could become restrictive as the wider community tends to see them as only representing their ethnic and/or religious communities, and may resist their becoming leaders in more mainstream organisations.

First among equals, supporter and encourager – the relational leader

By far the form of leadership most often and most fully described by interviewees, usually combining with other types of leadership, was that of team-player – “first among equals” or “a team member with final responsibility”. This is a relational form of leadership, in which leaders are constantly in touch with their team, “working alongside” them, promoting the strengths and abilities of their colleagues, monitoring and encouraging them. Improving the organisation’s effectiveness involved “getting people to work better together”, building the capacity of its executive team and the individuals comprising it. Thus most interviewees identified “people skills” as an important ingredient of good leadership. Mentoring and networking fit well with this style.

This type of relational leadership depends on the development of many skills, including what some interviewees name “empathy” and “emotional intelligence”. Such leaders are responsive to women’s changing needs and circumstances, their continual balancing of responsibilities for family, work and community. The relational leader has the skills to recognise women’s potential capacities and to match these with particular roles and tasks which nurture these. While relational leaders may delegate tasks, they may follow this up with monitoring and mentoring those women. They “bring others along with them”, motivating and affirming them. A successful leader is described by one respondent as “one who can really bring out the best in others, working with them, and not relying on the fact that the leader is in a position of authority”. In this vein, another woman described her “passion for helping women to meet their goals”.

An aspect of relational leadership is the sharing of power. One interviewee describes a good leader as “someone who listens to and takes advice from others”. Relational leadership is a particular marker of women’s style of leadership, and these interviews suggest that it characterises the majority of women’s voluntary organisational work. It is particularly this approach that many women feel they learn in the voluntary sector and transfer to their paid work, sometimes adding a relational and nurturing quality to their workplaces that would otherwise not be as strong.

Shouldering responsibility

Another aspect described by many women, particularly in the voluntary sphere, is their sense of duty, of taking on responsibilities because there is no-one else, because they perceived a need that otherwise would not be met. Such leadership may not have been looked for, and many women see themselves as placed in leadership roles by others, or through “rising through the organisation”, or “falling into it”. Leadership involves “assuming the leadership role”, and its duties. Leadership is a commitment, involving responsibility and decision-making. Some women speak of themselves as a “steady achiever” against many odds. Others see themselves as problem-solvers. This style of leadership is particularly characterised by minimal personal ambition and a strong sense of duty to one’s community or values, and is often triggered by responding to community needs.

These leadership styles tended to combine in women’s leadership, whether leaders were perceived as activists, teachers, mentors, elders or role models. Women were aware that whatever their leadership style, they need to be communicators, networkers, influencers and motivators to take part effectively in public life.

Women’s Leadership Journeys

Only a small number of women – seven of the 72 women interviewed – stated that they first gained their leadership skills from their experiences in voluntary organisations, and of these most learnt them within Guiding. Eighteen women were clear that their leadership skills derived initially from their paid work, including their participation in formal leadership courses, and these were transferred to their voluntary work. In addition, the CALD women represented in this research, including Muslim women, learnt leadership skills in their workplace and professional training and transferred them to voluntary organisations. However, on the whole, respondents found that these areas enrich one another and skills learnt in one area are applied within the other, in an ongoing process of cross-fertilisation, as one interviewee explains,

There is a reciprocal relationship for leadership skill for the workplace and in community work/organisations. The key issue is being able to adapt the skills to the specific environment. ... The need to foster team work and work as a team is as important in the professional workplace as it is in working in community organisations.

Cross-fertilisation of skills

In general formal skills such as strategic planning, financial management, time management, computer skills, team building, policy development, public speaking, conducting meetings and forums, writing reports and submissions were learned in professional and business contexts. Many women also describe learning some of these in their voluntary work. Some women also first develop their “people skills” in their paid workplace, although more often women describe learning these in voluntary and community settings, and employing them fruitfully in their workplaces.

Networks developed in community contexts can also benefit women's paid work, and vice versa. Confidence is another aspect that crosses over from one area to benefit the other.

Leadership pathways

Although some women first participate meaningfully in voluntary work when they retire from their paid work, most described journeys in which their paid and voluntary work intertwined throughout their lives. Commonly women moved in and out of voluntary positions as they responded to the complex and changing circumstances of their lives, in particular their responsibilities to their families. Thus women often described fragmented voluntary as well as paid working lives. Many women referred to the necessity for women's leadership roles to be flexible and responsive to these circumstances, and pointed to the need for support and re-training when women re-enter their workplaces.

Women tended to not just hold positions of leadership in one voluntary group, but in several. Their commitment to community work and responsibilities is remarkable considering that they shoulder the primary responsibilities for caring for children, grandchildren, parents, parents-in-law, in addition to their paid work, which is commonly also characterised by huge workloads and responsibility. It is hardly surprising that some women, when asked about their plans for future leadership feel that they need some time off to devote to themselves and their families.

Some women describe themselves as "growing into leadership", learning from their responsibilities within their families and from being leaders in their schools.

Other women take up leadership positions reluctantly because there is a need for someone to do them or because others see them as leaders.

Some become leaders when they rise to the challenge and jump in, seeking and seizing opportunities, prepared to learn on the job.

CALD women describe a difficult journey towards leadership that is full of obstacles. These include language barriers and cultural differences, some of which mean that it is not necessarily clear to them what is expected within organisations. Women can work very hard to overcome these drawbacks, and continually put themselves on the line, to take up new challenges and learn roles by doing them, not always with a great deal of understanding and support.

Promoting and Supporting Women's Leadership: recruiting, developing and retaining women leaders

Women identified many factors that both supported their capacity to act as leaders and hindered it. Factors identified as supportive need to be developed in organisations to recruit, develop and retain women leaders.

1. Affirming, encouraging environments

Respondents overwhelmingly pointed out that developing self-esteem and confidence underlies becoming a leader, and these are nurtured by affirmation and encouragement. Some women are privileged enough to have developed their self-confidence and esteem from childhoods in supportive families and communities. But this is by no means always the case, and women from more disadvantaged backgrounds can flourish in supportive and affirming organisational environments, or lacking access to such support do not flourish. Most interviewees emphasised the primary importance of encouragement, of knowing that others have confidence and trust in one's abilities or recognise one's potential. Many described that being expected to succeed when they did not have the same trust in themselves enabled them to do so. "The major factor, I think, was that others believed in my ability and wanted to work with me".

Sharing, encouragement and affirmation were named by CALD women as particularly necessary, as migration experiences tend to lower women's confidence in themselves and their ability to communicate. Many CALD women face the additional challenge that their culture may discourage women from being assertive, increasing their need for support and encouragement to take up positions of leadership.

2. Opportunities

Most women pointed to the need for potential leaders to be offered opportunities, to "stimulate them to continue their interest" and to offer "the freedom to try things out, to take risks safely", supported by "the knowledge that there was support from those above me or colleagues".

Many women identified education as one of the key opportunities that put them on the path towards leadership.

3. Women's willingness and commitment

To fulfil all the commitments of time, energy and finances associated with leadership, women need to have "a burning desire to be involved", be highly motivated, dedicated, and "ready to sustain something you may have set up". Some women's paths to leadership are strewn with obstacles and barriers which had been overcome, largely through their commitment to their goals.

4. Training

Ongoing training was a factor most respondents believed was important in recruiting, developing and retaining leaders. This included study leave in paid work, refresher courses, "exchange programs and tours to see how other women work in their local situations and tackle the problems and challenges".

It was suggested that time be taken to reflect on what was learned and how to overcome mistakes.

Role models and mentors were women's primary means of training themselves. Women learnt their skills particularly from observing other successful women, and sometimes also discovered what not to do.

5. Resources and support

Many women referred to the resource-poor nature of community organisations, and the financial burden individual leaders have to bear as a consequence. The costs women incur may reach tens of thousands of dollars for travel, phone and administrative costs and attendance at conferences and meetings. Many are constrained by these costs. Greater resourcing of organisations would allow more women to take on and remain in these positions.

Furthermore, greater resourcing could be used for building the capacity of members and leaders of organisations. Currently for many organisations the only external funding received is for occasional specific projects, "which must always benefit the general community and not the organisation that is providing the infrastructure and personnel". Thus there is no funding available for developing the skills of volunteers. For example, Guides Australia delivers high quality ongoing training to many thousands of women and is a recognised mainstream youth organisation. All trainers are volunteers, and while the organisation manages to reimburse their expenses, no government funding is received, not even for training their own trainers. Yet training courses are expected to keep up with new legislation, which constantly requires the introduction of new core modules.

Greater resourcing would enable organisations to build more up-to-date and responsive infrastructure. For example it would open new possibilities for using on-line technology in training and mentoring members and leaders in remote areas. It would support the development of web-based information and services, email groups and teleconferencing.

With regard to their personal situations, many respondents indicated that the wholehearted support of families and partners was essential to being able to take on and sustain leadership positions.

6. Succession planning and career paths

Leadership in voluntary work is time limited, which makes succession planning important to organisations. Potential leaders need to be identified, nurtured, supported and put in the right place for their skills. "Delegate tasks to them but make sure you follow up showing interest and making sure they are managing. In other works you need to mentor them".

Some interviewees suggested that organisations could develop career paths for leaders, who would graduate through higher levels. This would work well with an organisation's succession plan.

By contrast, women have been discouraged when they have encountered lack of support,

...and in some cases downright opposition from older leaders who have come to regard their leadership role as their power base and feel threatened by new talent in the ranks. The organisation needs to be structured in such a way this situation cannot occur.

7. Flexible, responsive and family-friendly organisations

Women were found to move in and out of organisational positions in response to the many calls on their time and energy, mainly from their paid work and family obligations. They call for organisations to be women-focused and family-friendly to be able to work around women's different roles:

...(their) conflict of trying to fulfil so many different roles. They are trying to improve their qualifications; trying to have a relationship; trying to have a family before their fertility clock stops ticking and trying to have a career. The government and organisations have to be more women focused.

Suggestions were made that organisations could be flexible about hours and prepared to change meeting times to suit the needs of younger women, perhaps offering two different meeting times, or breakfast, day and evening groups, and meetings in different locations. Organisations may need to change the format of their meetings to suit the needs of younger women, such as reducing meeting times or including more social activities.

They suggested that new ways of doing things be considered, including having co-leadership roles, partnerships or shared roles. Setting up email groups and teleconferencing should also be considered.

Organisations need to understand different factors that might impact on women and offer support for all of women's life changes, in which different issues predominate at different periods of their lives. In particular, young women need access to good quality and affordable child care.

8. Getting something back

Many women emphasised leaders' need to feel valued and appreciated for their contribution; in order to feel a much-needed "sense of achievement and success" their work needs to be acknowledged. "No-one likes to feel used" explains one respondent. Instead recognise how leaders have met difficult challenges and "celebrate their successes".

Organisations need to have a cause which resonates with women, and some respondents find that issue-based projects in particular attract young women. Organisations may offer women opportunities to achieve their personal goals and meet some of their needs. Providing a forum in which women's issues are discussed and identified is a step towards these changes, and may open up organisations to women of different ages and backgrounds.

Many women gain a sense of connection with others through their community work, of belonging and friendship, and of being part of a community. The networks developed in voluntary work are sometimes used by women in their business and professional lives.

Organisation work should also be fun!

One of the barriers to women continuing their community work is its expense.

Community organisations all lack the necessary corporate financial resources to fund representational travel, accommodation, conference fees, function administrative expenses and development training to adequately support their leaders. The time commitment required when you also have paid employment, study and family responsibilities to juggle is a major negative factor. ... some of these positions are as big or bigger than a full time paid position.

Thus some women argue that there should be financial contributions to cover some of these costs. This relates to better resourcing of community organisations, another factor that would support women's contributions.

9. The Satisfaction of Contributing

"Working in a community organisation provides the opportunity to make a worthwhile contribution because it needs to be done". Many women want to "make a difference", do something to improve the circumstances of those in their communities, leave the world a better place. This is the spirit of volunteering referred to by Geulah Solomon (see case study).

10. End to discrimination and unfair practices

Covering a range of ages and backgrounds including mainstream women and those from different cultural backgrounds, the interviews nevertheless referred to many experiences of gender discrimination against women. There were many references to the minimal value and credit given women by male colleagues, the lack of encouragement from men, and the problems women face in getting "a fair go and an equal chance".

From the volume of these experiences it can be concluded that gender discrimination is still systemic. One young woman asks that something be done about the bullying men who oppose women progressing into leadership positions. She echoes many who call for greater legislative and institutional regulation of what is after all a social problem.

11. Clarity

“A good organiser or leader will make sure everyone in the team is kept informed and understands her specific role in the team so everyone is working toward the same goal.” Thus good leaders share information, think clearly and plan well. When there is not clarity about roles and responsibilities, problems may arise. One respondent explains that “in some instances women may not understand what is required when working in leadership roles and are set up to fail”.

Several respondents emphasised the need to develop written guidelines similar to job descriptions for leaders. CALD women found little induction into these roles. They used performance management documents from their workplaces to give them ideas about how to carry out their voluntary leadership roles, which otherwise they did not understand.

Barriers to women becoming and remaining leaders

Finances and time

“The huge unpaid commitment required of my personal time and financial resources is the biggest barrier to my staying longer” explains one respondent, articulating a theme expressed by many. One leader speaks of her presidency of an organisation as “a full-time, unpaid, expensive position with no administrative help” and looks forward “to reclaiming my life! And my wallet!”

Distance

The difficulties and expense posed by distance create a particular barrier, restricting the participation of women in rural and remote areas, and creating challenges for Australia-wide organisations whose membership spans enormous distances between and within states and territories.

Disability and ill-health

Disability and ill-health (one’s own and that of family members) are other factors excluding women from the commitments of leadership.

Need for particular training

Lack of business and other skills were cited as reasons for women not transferring their skills to other positions such as corporate boards. Respondents argued that subsidised training and sound information are needed for women to make this transition.

Discrimination

Many women described the gender and racial/cultural discrimination they routinely experienced throughout their careers. They found that women were not given the same opportunities as men, or when these were available they were offered later in life. Women from all types of business and professional backgrounds described being actively discriminated against. For example some medical women had low morale from their experiences of workplace discrimination, and women in medical leadership were commonly provided with less infrastructure than equivalent male colleagues.

Lack of support from family and partner

Women were aware that they needed the support of their families to take on leadership roles. Without this they would not have taken these positions.

Lack of child care

Many women with young children are constrained by work and family responsibilities, and are unable to take up further commitments if options for child care are not available.

Issues for CALD communities

The CALD women respondents found that they did not receive inductions into the organisations they joined, and were not adequately supported when there were not effective leaders. They found that voluntary organisations are sometimes run on good intentions rather than well-organised management. From these experiences they believe it is important for them to mentor and train women from other cultural groups.

They explained that there are two groups of migrant women:

- New communities, requiring language and leadership support, who may need encouragement to become involved in community organisations;
- Communities that have been in Australia longer and understand the systems. They wish to undergo training to become members of boards but cannot afford to unless this is government subsidised.

CALD women would like to see a government-funded cross-cultural mentoring system where existing leaders from more established communities can act as buddies/mentors for new arrival women.

Retaining women leaders in communities

Sometimes the skills and experience women gain in leadership positions are lost to the organisation or community when they leave. Some women are happy to leave and spend more time with their families. However for those that are interested to transfer their skills to other forms of leadership the following possibilities were suggested:

- Mentor the next group of leaders;
- Volunteer in other organisations, not necessarily in a leadership role but perhaps in a supportive role;
- Use the organisation's website to raise issues including leadership issues, and thus share resources and ideas;
- Develop programs for the organisation, perhaps as a project or research officer;
- Liaise between executive group and feeder groups; past leaders may offer wider perspectives;
- Continue to train one's own children in leadership strategies;

- Transfer skills from a community role into one's professional role;
- Join a not for profit or corporate Board;
- Move from a small to a large organisation;
- Mentor/train members of disadvantaged groups in skills such as running meetings.

Organisations can make better use of past leaders' experience and abilities in the following ways:

- Form committees made up of past presidents to review the organisation;
- Ask leaders to record their experiences, processes and procedures;
- Utilise Immediate Past Presidents as a source of knowledge of what has happened in the past (but be wary of "interfering!");
- Past leaders act as mentors for younger women.

Some women had attempted to add their names to the web-based list for women who wish to join boards. Finding the questionnaire bureaucratic and not relevant to their situations they did not continue the process.

Many women felt strongly that they need particular financial and legal information in order to be able to join corporate boards, and some had been informed by particular boards that they needed specific qualifications. While women should have access to the information and training they feel to be necessary, it is also important that others recognise their prior learning and on the job experience. Women in leadership roles have developed numerous capacities in their many years of "apprenticeship" in organisations. Current training programs formally recognise prior learning and on the job learning, a practice that boards would do well to adopt.

5. Two Case Studies

Two interviews were undertaken with women from contrasting backgrounds to illustrate the diversity of women's leadership journeys. The semi-structured interviews were written up in summary/story form and sent to both women for revision.

“Joan”: Leadership Experiences of an Indigenous Woman

“Joan” is about fifty and has just begun a very senior government position in Aboriginal services. She described her difficult pathway into leadership. Her first jobs were in factories, as she had not finished school. After some years of living with an unsupportive husband who gambled away their earnings, she realised that the only way she could guarantee a home for her two children and sick mother was to get a better-paid job. Their need spurred her on, as “I knew that having a home for them was up to me”. Applying for a job as a secretary, she was told to do a computer course. She followed this advice, sat a public service exam, and was eventually employed doing filing in a government department.

While Joan knew that she wanted to work in Aboriginal affairs she had little idea how to achieve this, but once within the public service she found many opportunities for training and took every course available. One of the most helpful was a certificate course in leadership and management for Aboriginal women, which she was given study leave to attend. This program was only for Aboriginal women and that fact made it possible for Joan to feel confident to participate. Their presentations were videoed and they gave each other feedback in a non-confronting way. Joan explained that even the inclusion of Aboriginal men, who have different needs, would have interfered with this atmosphere of acceptance and encouragement.

Joan consistently applied for more senior jobs. For a period of time she had a supportive manager who trusted her abilities and encouraged her to try things out in her own way, and this helped build her confidence. This manager would not tolerate racism in the workplace, which transformed the work culture.

In time Joan became an Aboriginal Liaison Officer (ALO) within a government department. Her rise up the ladder was met with nastiness from (white) colleagues, such as comments that “you only have to be Aboriginal to get the job”, an attitude Joan continued to encounter. She was required to visit a number of towns across a large rural area, but when she was away white fellow officers made comments that she was “on walkabout” or had “gone fishing”. She worked very hard in order to disprove all these comments, always dressing well, being the first at meetings and never taking time off. There was no-one at this stage who supported her, but by this time she had “toughened” and was less upset by criticism.

Joan was offered an acting position as manager of an Aboriginal service for family violence, which gave her an opportunity to practice some of what she'd learnt about management, and gain valuable knowledge and experience in working with family violence. After returning briefly to the public service, she moved into a position in an Aboriginal organisation. She found this more satisfying, as she and her work colleagues shared the same goals. She regularly visited and worked with remote communities, mentoring their members, explaining government policies and helping them develop their own. However even here she witnessed discrimination from the Aboriginal men in charge, as white workers without equivalent skills were promoted above her and some very competent Aboriginal women colleagues. As managers these white workers were dependent on the knowledge and skills of Joan and her Aboriginal colleagues, and clearly did not have the understanding needed.

After several years she moved into a position dealing with Aboriginal affairs in a government department. Even though this was well-paid, she found that she "floated" in this position for about four years, and was given little responsibility or purpose. She felt she was there as a token Aboriginal woman, and her skills, experience and knowledge were not acknowledged or utilised. Several times she developed projects, but these were taken over by non-Aboriginal men, and she was pushed out of the work she had developed. After some time she was given the area of family violence, an area in which she had developed much expertise, and at this stage had a supportive manager who trusted her abilities but also gave her direction when she felt she was struggling. Her program grew, but was then moved to another area, where her new manager had no interest in or knowledge of family violence. Once again her program was moved, and again her new manager had no interest, expertise or understanding of the need to partner with Aboriginal communities to address violence. A white man took over her work, misrepresented her to colleagues and managers, bullied and harassed her, humiliated her publicly and undermined the relationships she had built in the community. Complaints to higher managers did nothing. He and the manager assumed he could take over her position on reference groups and working groups for family violence made up solely of Aboriginal women. There was no understanding of these serious issues, or of appropriate ways of working with communities, and respecting and building on the work already being done.

Part of Joan's work was to recommend Aboriginal projects in the community that deserved funding. Through her many contacts developed over the years she knew what was happening in the communities and which programs should be supported. She also knew where funding was not used to communities' best advantage. However her knowledge and experience were consistently ignored, and decisions were made by those higher up the chain with no on-the-ground knowledge. She was dismayed to find that wonderful initiatives did not get funding while those that did not use it well continued to be supported. Her advice was rarely heeded.

Eventually Joan left for another position (her current one), but is very sad about the wasted resources and lost opportunities for Aboriginal communities she witnessed over these years.

There were not many periods during Joan's leadership journey in which she had supportive managers, so she sought and found sources of support outside, including several mentors who became close friends. Their confidence and trust in her enabled her to make many positive changes in her life. When she lost sight of her capacities their view of her helped her realise that she was someone worthy of respect who had a valuable contribution to make.

Joan always looked up to and learnt from observing particular role models within the Aboriginal community. As more Aboriginal people became employed within governments, formal and informal government employer networks developed which she has participated in. As an Aboriginal woman she has supported many women and communities over the years, and now mentors younger women. When she retires she intends to continue to work for her community. She has always wanted to make things better for her people. She is continually inspired in this by her memory of her mother and the sad life she lived as a woman taken from her own mother and community.

Dr Geulah Solomon OAM

Dr Geulah Solomon OAM has had an eminent career as a scholar and teacher in universities in Victoria, and a leader in the Australian Jewish community. Geulah explains that her sense of responsibility was shaped by her experiences of prejudice and discrimination as a child in a rural Victorian town, in which her family was the only Jewish one. They did not overtly display their Judaism, yet when World War II broke out Geulah and her brother were pelted with stones walking to and from school, and their schoolbooks and belongings were covered with swastikas. Geulah had thought of herself as primarily Australian, but these experiences enhanced her Jewish identity and made her realise her connection with the Jewish community.

Geulah refers to a number of early influences. From virtually her first day at school she wanted to become a teacher, and attributes this to the men and women teachers who acted as wonderful role models. Independent thinkers, they inspired her, gave her a feeling of worth and encouraged her to be an achiever. Her father was also a formative influence. His belief that every person has a responsibility to leave the world a better place had a lasting effect on her and guides her community work. He encouraged her and believed she should have an independent profession.

On leaving school Geulah moved to Melbourne and began university in the early days of the Jewish Students' Study Group. Attracting young Jewish people from 18 to 30 years old, the Study Group held regular camps and ran interesting programs. She became its President.

As a young teacher within the university Geulah became involved in the newly-formed professional organisations related to her work, in fact she became the founding secretary of a number of them, and joined the founding executive group of others – thirty in all! She also co-founded the Victorian Association for Gifted and Talented Children - the precursor of the current Tournament of the Minds - and became the editor of its magazine. She initiated the first training course for teaching gifted and talented children, which began as an elective but soon became a core subject. Geulah went on to co-found Graduate Diplomas in Women's Studies, Multi-Cultural Education and Community Education.

She was asked by several eminent academics from other universities to co-found the Australian Academics for Peace in the Middle East, a program that took academics to Israel on two-week study missions. She also set up and led several ten-week study missions in Israel each with up to forty students and staff, of which four weeks were spent volunteering on a kibbutz and six weeks studying education.

These initiatives all took place in the “heady days of the 1970s”, when there was an eagerness and support for innovative ideas. Geulah developed extensive networks which she employed in these endeavours. She balanced these activities with an academic career, study for a PhD, and responsibilities as a married woman with children.

In 1983 Geulah and her husband went to live in Israel, and she worked at the Hebrew University. When they returned in 1984 Geulah became involved in the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) as the Chair of the Status of Women.

She had previously avoided women's organisations as her first experiences of them as a young woman “drove me crazy”. She felt they were bogged down in petty details and lacked vision, focusing on discussions about sandwiches and cakes. She also disliked the petty politics that seemed to dog them. However with the encouragement of NCJW's president Malvina Malinek, Geulah initiated the Scholar in Residence program and began her long advocacy on behalf of women who had not been granted a “Get” (a divorce in Jewish Law). She represented NCJW at the UN Conference Against Racism in 2000. Geulah won a grant for NCJW to research “the sandwich generation”, the super-women who had responsibility for their parents and parents-in-law on one side, and their children and grandchildren on the other, while maintaining their own careers and community work. A similar initiative was later undertaken and broadened by the Australian Women's Coalition.

When she finished her office as president, Geulah assumed the Status of Women portfolio for International Council of Jewish Women. In 2005, she was one of two NGO members of the official Australian delegation to the 49th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York.

When asked about obstacles or difficulties encountered in developing her numerous initiatives, Geulah felt there were “frustrations” rather than difficulties. As one of the super-women in the so-called “sandwich generation”, time management in balancing family, community and work commitments was the most pertinent issue. Geulah noticed that she felt more guilt at prioritising her voluntary work than she had with her professional commitments. As national president of NCJW she was aware that if she did not attend to certain things the organisation would lose opportunities. She “tried to be everywhere”, attending meetings four evenings a week and sitting on boards of other organisations. However she was aware of the toll this took on her family.

Her leadership style is primarily entrepreneurial, depending on innovation and initiative, personal energy and commitment, and using strong and wide-ranging networks. For all the problems that leadership brings, Geulah feels that the satisfaction of knowing you’ve fulfilled your potential and “made a difference” outweighs everything else. She quotes the Russian Refusenik Ida Nudel, who won a long battle to emigrate to Israel after years of imprisonment and exile as a human rights activist in the former Soviet Union: “Helping others is helping yourself”. Geulah believes that leadership should be part of a culture of volunteering, where the reward is in the doing of it, not the acknowledgement gained.

Geulah does not believe that people are born leaders, but learn to be leaders, chiefly by being in such positions. She observes that women have a particular style of leadership that is non-confrontational, co-operative and persuasive. These are effective with women, but might not be so well-received in mixed groups, such as community and corporate boards. Generally however, the skills learnt in voluntary organisations can be transferred to boards. She suggests also that voluntary organisations could develop a career path for women through low, middle to high levels of leadership.

Assuming that group relations and team-building are skills that are learned in the field, Geulah recommends that the ingredients of good leadership training for women should include:

- understanding of community psychology – managing change; succession planning; transitional issues;
- promoting a culture of volunteerism where it is the norm to be a volunteer and take on leadership (a culture that she fears may be declining);
- the mechanics of leadership – financial management, accountancy and governance issues.

It may comfort leaders beset with doubts about their own capabilities to realise that despite her rich and meritorious career as a leader in both professional and voluntary spheres, Geulah still has qualms about her leadership qualities, suspecting she may be better at the managing side of things than the charismatic. For those that see her in action such doubts are not obvious, as one observes her energetically planning her next five projects.

6. Training Programs for Women's Leadership: Findings

Data on organisations' formal and informal leadership training were gathered from two sources. 22 surveys collecting details of organisations' leadership programs were returned from organisations belonging to the four secretariats, and 25 responses were returned from participants or graduates of these programs. Not all surveys or interview responses identified the organisations or programs they described, however most participant responses could be correlated with the surveys. In all, these represented at least seventeen different organisations, including different branches of some, and included: Zonta; Soroptimist International; Conflict Resolving Women's Network Australia; VIEW Club; Guides; National Rural Health Alliance; Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement; National Council of Women of Australia; Australian Federation of Medical Women; Transport Women Australia Limited; Australian Church Women; Mothers Union; Pan Pacific & South East Asia Women's Association of Australia; COTA/National Seniors Partnership; Australian Federation of University Women; National Council of Jewish Women of Australia; Muslim Women's National Network of Australia.

Responses described a number of different training programs not only aimed at leadership. Only some organisations ran formal structured leadership programs, but most instituted formal and informal mentoring, modelling and shadowing for new office-bearers. Some offered scholarships that funded young women's study outside or opportunities within the organisation. Mentoring was by far the most utilised training strategy. The following section summarises key elements of those programs that fit the terms of reference of this project - formal and informal programs to enhance leadership, including mentoring and networking.

These programs tended to target three different groups:

- the organisation's leaders/board members/office bearers;
- their general members;
- outsiders e.g. a course for business women and a day conference for year 10 school girls.

Organisations' leadership programs can be categorised as

1. training days for the whole leadership team;
2. programs which build the capacity, skills and networks of members (and therefore also the organisation);
3. induction and mentoring for new members and/or new leaders;
4. formal mentoring programs open to members;
5. ongoing professional quality leadership programs.

1. Training days for the whole leadership team

Several organisations ran annual one or two day training, some as retreats in which members of the board or leadership team were trained together. Participants found this helpful as it meant that they could access ideas from their training as a group. Content included directors'/board members' rights, obligations and responsibilities, communication within the board structure and with members, and strategic planning. They provided a knowledge base for being on a board, overseeing management and holding themselves and others accountable.

2. Programs which build the capacity, skills and networks of members (and therefore also the organisation)

Several organisations ran their own programs or sent members to outside ones that developed skills such as communication (including listening and public speaking), self esteem, enhanced awareness of women's rights and opportunities for women. They built confidence, provided role models, encouraged networking, fellowship, peer support and mentoring.

These concentrated on building members' capacity and other supports for their leadership in their communities (such as CALD communities) or professions. The organisation benefited as its members became more skilled representatives, and internal networks were developed for members to work together on issues.

3. Induction and mentoring for new members and/or new leaders

A number of organisations inducted new members and leaders, providing information on the history, values and goals of the organisation, and the roles and responsibilities of office bearers. Induction could take 2-8 hours, and was sometimes followed by shadowing existing leaders, and/or mentoring. This could take place as one to one meetings or in small groups. However national organisations found distance a problem in bringing together such groups.

4. Formal mentoring programs open to members

Another successful program offered mentoring to members, matching mentors and mentorees around business or professional interests. This built the skills and networks of individuals within the organisation, but did not necessarily build the organisation's own capacity.

5. Ongoing high quality leadership programs

A particularly impressive and perhaps the only example (within this project's sample) of continuing, high quality, and all-round leadership programs is that of Guides Australia, incorporating national and state programs. Including guiding awareness, leadership development, programming, first aid, outdoor skills, knowledge of girls, management skills, time management, the program consists of initial core modules, followed by modules chosen by participants. These are wide-ranging, offering choice and flexibility to suit individuals' interests and needs. Training is carried out in an atmosphere of fellowship and fun, and leaders are encouraged to challenge themselves personally. Connected to the Australian Adult Leadership Program, courses are competency-based, some connected to recognised Certificate qualifications.

Each leader is also appointed a Guiding Partner, an experienced leader who acts as mentor. This combines the strengths of formal and informal programs, building consistency, support and follow-up into the over-all training and leadership system. It was estimated that approximately 11,000 leaders were involved in this training in Australia over the last two years.

The programs are delivered by highly qualified volunteer trainers within Guiding. A Training Manager and Committee of State Training Advisers oversee the training program and the competencies of trainers. However apart from discrete grants such as one received from the Australian Women's Coalition, costs are carried by the organisation at district, state and national levels, and by the voluntary work of trainers.

Resourcing programs

Most organisations resource their training programs, sometimes asking for contributions from participants and/or employers. On the whole trainers give their time and skill voluntarily. Exceptions occurred when a specific course attracted government funding, but this was necessarily time-limited and for a specific type of training and target group. All project respondents referred to the problems and limitations their organisations experienced due to lack of funding for leadership training. Many were aware that women trainers giving their time freely created another competing area of obligations in women's life/work stress, and another area in which women's work is not recompensed.

Child care was offered by one organisation for women participating in its training, and was found to be valuable.

Outcomes

Survey and interview responses demonstrate that women find formal courses and informal training in the form of mentoring and networking invaluable for their voluntary and paid work and sometimes also for their family life. All the programs outlined above build confidence and self-esteem. Many women found that training in an all female environment was important and allowed them to experiment and discuss problems they otherwise would not have raised.

Learning specific skills for being on leadership teams/boards were considered invaluable both for the women and their organisations.

Many women found courses in public speaking very helpful. CALD women particularly used these courses to build their confidence in both spoken and written language skills. Listening skills, negotiation and dealing with conflict were also useful.

Building networks for professional work, business and support were valued, as was being able to draw on the experience of mature, experienced leaders through mentoring.

Suggestions for improving programs

The most suggested improvement was external funding for programs, to better resource programs and make them more responsive to the complexities of women's lives. Flexibility to suit women's needs was a valued aspect of many programs. Women emphasised "one size doesn't fit all".

It was suggested that greater funding would allow organisations to better train mentors and access experienced trainers for delivering programs. Organisations such as Guides who already use qualified trainers suggest that external funding would enable them to be paid.

Some organisations need funding to extend their existing leadership courses for office-bearers to their members.

There were suggestions that individual organisations' programs would benefit from being linked to national training modules and Certificate courses. A further idea was that a national training body be established by/for women's organisations - an Australian women's training/networking and mentoring alliance

Australia-wide organisations would like the resources to introduce on-line learning and mentoring to reach their members in rural and remote areas, and encourage greater membership. With funding, Guides Australia would establish more on-line programs for rural and remote areas, which would require access to new technology, remote learning facilities, technicians, and laptops at remote venues.

On-line facilities could enhance existing training. For example one national organisation organised tele-meetings prior to their executive members' training day to help set agendas and form bridges.

Other suggestions for improving programs were that more formal networking and mentoring meetings be organised to follow up the learning within formal programs.

Mentoring programs

Role models and mentors are women's primary means of training themselves, and women learn from being near and observing other successful women. The following factors need to be considered within mentoring programs.

- Programs can usefully be combined with peer support and networking opportunities or programs;
- Past and current leaders may act as mentors for younger women in their own organisations and outside, and could mentor women from more disadvantaged groups;

- It is important to match mentor and mentoree appropriately, perhaps by having mentorees choose their mentors. Different circumstances and styles of leadership need different approaches;
- Mentoring programs appear to work best when integrated with formal leadership programs and can be a part of the ongoing training many women request;
- Training for mentors;
- Approaches that are patronising and do not recognise women's existing skills and knowledge are not helpful;
- Mentorees need to feel trusted and be given space and opportunities to develop their own approach, act according to their own judgement, and take risks;
- Connect mentoring with exchange programs with other organisations, or observation of how other organisations work and deal with problems;
- Combine hands-on experience with time to reflect on what is being learned and how to overcome problems or weaknesses;
- Delegate tasks to potential leaders, and support and mentor them in carrying these out;
- Mentoring can be offered to women at different stages of an organisation's career path, and needs to be responsive to what women need to know;
- Recognition of the problems of having older leaders who exclude or oppose younger ones;
- Induction into clear organisational roles and responsibilities, procedures and goals;
- Recognise, work within and attempt to find ways of balancing more appropriately the constraints of women's life circumstances – competing family, community and paid work commitments.

The Perfect Leadership Program

Focus group participants were asked to design the perfect leadership program for women. The following factors draw on their answers:

Training programs should be affordable and accessible with child-care facilities. They should be flexible and relevant to particular organisations, and build on participants' prior learning.

Formal structured program

- Managing change;
- Succession planning;
- Time management, delegating (and monitoring);
- Conflict resolution, mediation and procedural fairness;
- Evaluation and measurement;
- Understanding the roles of voluntary leaders and paid staff;
- Meeting procedures, including codes of conduct, and chairing meetings;
- Media training;

- Listening skills, written skills, report writing;
- Decision-making;
- Governance – state legislation as applicable;
- Leadership qualities relevant to participating organisations;
- Presentation skills, including using Powerpoint;
- Financial management;
- History of the organisation, its objectives and constitution;
- Advocacy skills;
- Understanding bullying and harassment;
- Dealing with personal-professional stress – how to balance life and work.

Informal

- Being near and observing successful women;
- Hands-on experience - and reflecting on it;
- Peer support, mentoring, networking;
- Variation of presentation styles to suit different scenarios;
- Being an observer in another organisation.

7. Demographic Data

Questionnaires on demographic data were sent out with all interview sheets, and 57 were returned. Not all respondents answered all the questions on the sheet. Demographic sheets were not given to participants in focus groups.

Percentages in the following charts are generally taken to the nearest whole number.

The greatest number of respondents, 37% (21) came from Victoria, with NSW being the second most represented state, with 14 respondents (24%). 70% (40) of respondents were born in Australia and 21% (12) in the U.K. The remaining 9% (5) were born in Germany, Malaysia, Russia and Roumania.

Women aged 50 to 75 were most represented in the interview sample. Women aged 50 to 60 comprised 37% (21) of the group, and women aged 65-74 made up 30% (17). Only 14% respondents were aged less than 50 while 9% were 75 and older.

Half the group lived with their partner or husband and a quarter lived on their own. Women who were retired or not in paid work made up the largest group of 40% (23), while the next most represented group of 30% (17) were in full-time paid work. Education and training was the area of employment most represented, at 19% (11), while those working in administration, office work and business made up 16% (9).

A quarter of respondents did not answer the section on income. Of those who answered, household income was fairly widely spread, with similar numbers earning \$20,000 - \$40,000 (10%), \$50,000 - \$60,000 (11%) and \$100,000 - \$150,000 (12%).

STATE/TERRITORY OF RESIDENCE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Victoria	21	37%
Queensland	9	16%
New South Wales	14	24%
ACT	5	9%
Western Australia	3	5%
South Australia	4	7%
Not answered	1	2%
TOTAL	57	100%

COUNTRY OF BIRTH	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Australia	40	70%
U.K.	12	21%
Germany	1	2%
Malaysia	2	3%
Russia	1	2%
Roumania	1	2%
TOTAL	57	100%

AGE BRACKET	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Under 30	2	3.5%
35-39	3	5%
40-44	1	2%
45-49	2	3.5%
50-54	11	19%
55-59	10	18%
60-64	6	10%
65-69	9	16%
70-74	8	14%
75-79	2	3.5%
80-84	2	3.5%
85-89	1	2%
TOTAL	57	100%

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Lives alone	15	26%
Lives with partner/husband	28	49%
Lives with various family members	3	5%
Lives with child/children	9	16%
Not answered	2	4%
TOTAL	57	100%

EMPLOYMENT STATUS	NUMBER	
Paid full time	17	30%
Paid part time	4	7%
Paid casual	2	4%
Self employed	7	12%
Voluntary work/retired	23	40%
Student	3	5%
Not answered	1	2%
TOTAL	57	100%

OCCUPATION	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Admin/Office/Business management	9	16%
Education/Training	11	19%
Accounts	2	3.5%
Religious minister	1	1.8%
Company director	1	1.8%
Medical	2	3.5%
Statistics	1	1.8%
Science	1	1.8%
Fitness	1	1.8%
Consultant	2	3.5%
CEO	2	3.5%
Human Resources	1	1.8%
Archaeologist	1	1.8%
Community worker	1	1.8%
Student	1	1.8%
No occupation /Retired	20	35%
TOTAL	57	100%

FAMILY INCOME RANGE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Less than 6,000 per annum	1	2%
6,001-20,000	1	2%
20,001-40,000	6	10%
40,001-50,000	2	4%
50,001-60,000	6	11%
60,001-70,000	4	7%
70,001-80,000	4	7%
80,001-90,000	3	5%
90,001-100,000	3	5%
100,001-150,000	7	12%
More than 150,000	5	9%
No answer	15	26%
TOTAL	57	100%

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

These consultations illustrate the enormous contribution women make to their communities through their membership and leadership of voluntary organisations, commitments taken on in addition to women's already heavy responsibilities to families and paid work. Apart from a few exceptions such as Guides, women gain most of their initial leadership training from their paid work. Skills learned in paid and voluntary work enrich one another and are applied in both areas in an ongoing process of cross-fertilisation. Government, business and professional workplaces all benefit from the skills women transfer from their experience in voluntary organisations.

Women's working lives, both paid and voluntary, tend to be fragmented in response to changing circumstances, particularly their primary "caring" responsibilities within families. This finding supports those of previous AWC reports, *The Caring Sandwich: Caring for Young and Old – the Price Women Pay*, and AWC's Report on Grandparenting. Women ask that governments, business and professional sectors recognise the problems women face in aspiring to life/work/family balance, by developing women-focused and flexible work and training programs. This is one way in which women's skills can be developed and retained, and would also impact positively on women's health.

Women bring particular qualities to their leadership, most commonly a relational form of leadership. This is non-hierarchical, consultative, affirming and encouraging of others. Women themselves flourish through encouragement, trust and affirmation. Capacities for relational leadership are transferred to and benefit women's paid workplaces.

The capacities women bring from business and professional areas into voluntary organisations, and processes such as strategic planning and financial management, are transforming these organisations. These changes are also encouraged by governmental expectations that non-government organisations develop structures for governance that ensure high levels of performance and accountability. In this climate good quality leadership training is essential.

Where organisations train leadership teams as a group there is opportunity for these skills to be more uniformly distributed and anchored within shared organisational culture and practices, rather than being founded on particular capacities of individual leaders.

Gender and cultural discrimination are still systemic barriers to leadership encountered routinely by women.

Promoting and Supporting Women's Leadership: recruiting, developing and retaining women leaders

The following factors were identified as those needed to recruit, develop and retain women leaders in organisations:

- Affirming, encouraging environments
- Opportunities
- Women's willingness and commitment
- Training
- Resources and support
- Succession planning and career paths
- Flexible, responsive and family-friendly organisations
- Getting something back
- The satisfaction of contributing
- Clarity

Barriers to leadership

A number of barriers to women taking on and retaining leadership positions were identified:

- Finances and time needed for leadership commitments
- Distance
- Disability and ill-health (one's own and that of family members)
- Discrimination, both gender and racial/cultural
- Lack of support from family and partner
- Lack of child care

Issues for CALD women

Newly arrived communities need language and leadership support. More settled communities can support and mentor newly arrived women. CALD women recommend that governments fund a mentoring system across cultures where existing leaders can act as buddies/mentors for new arrival women.

Women's Leadership Programs

Organisations offered many networking and mentoring opportunities and some also delivered formal training programs:

- training days for the whole leadership team/board
- programs which build the capacity, skills and networks of members (and therefore also the organisation)
- induction and mentoring for new members and/or new leaders
- formal mentoring programs open to members
- ongoing professional quality leadership programs.

Most organisations funded and resourced their own training programs and trainers gave their time and skill voluntarily. Lack of external funding was the major factor limiting the range, quality, sustainability and style of training.

Women found formal and informal training invaluable for skills development, confidence and self-esteem. An all female environment was an important aspect for many women. Courses in public speaking, listening skills, negotiation and dealing with conflict were also useful. Networking and mentoring were important, and many women learned from observing successful women.

Women's suggestions for improving programs

- External funding for programs is needed to:
 - train mentors
 - access experienced and qualified trainers
 - enable existing qualified trainers to be paid
 - extend existing leadership courses to members
 - introduce on-line learning and mentoring for members in rural and remote areas;
- Programs should be flexible to suit women's needs - "one size doesn't fit all";
- Link programs to national training modules and Certificate courses;
- Create an Australian women's body and/or training/networking and mentoring alliance;
- Institute more formal networking and mentoring meetings to follow up formal programs.

Mentoring programs

The following factors need to be considered within mentoring programs.

- Combined with peer support and networking opportunities or programs;
- Leaders may act as mentors for younger women in their own organisations and outside, and from more disadvantaged groups;
- Mentor and mentoree need to be well-matched, perhaps by having mentorees choose their mentors. Different circumstances and styles of leadership need different approaches;
- Integrate mentoring programs with formal leadership programs;
- Training for mentors;
- Approaches that are patronising and do not recognise women's existing skills and knowledge are not helpful;
- Mentorees need to feel trusted and be given space and opportunities to develop their own approach, act according to their own judgement, and take risks;
- Connect mentoring with exchange programs with other organisations, or observation of how other organisations work and deal with problems;
- Combine hands-on experience with time to reflect on what is being learned and how to overcome problems or weaknesses;

- Delegate tasks to potential leaders, and support and mentor them in carrying these out;
- Offer mentoring to women at different stages of an organisation's career path - needs to be responsive to what women need to know;
- Recognition of the problems of having older leaders who exclude or oppose younger ones;
- Induction into clear organisational roles and responsibilities, procedures and goals;
- Recognise, work within and attempt to find ways of balancing more appropriately the constraints of women's life circumstances – competing family, community and paid work commitments.

Recommendations

It is clear that the community as a whole benefits from women's participation in voluntary organisations, including government, business and professional workplaces. Thus it would be beneficial for these sectors, as well as the organisations themselves, to contribute to the development of women as leaders, the capacity of women's organisations to better resource women's leadership and the development and delivery of good quality and sustained training programs.

What the business sector can do

- Work with government to create information and induction packages for women who are considering becoming members of corporate boards;
- Corporate Boards could encourage women to join by recognising women's prior and on the job learning within community leadership positions;
- Build alliances with women's organisations and in partnership with them develop ways of resourcing their leadership programs, e.g. "lend" women business leaders to organisations as mentors, trainers, trouble-shooters; have women from community organisations "shadow" women business or professional leaders; include and sponsor voluntary leaders in their training programs. Businesses gain the opportunity to develop closer links with and better understanding of particular communities;
- Develop family-friendly policies and practices, including child care facilities, flexible hours and paid maternity and family leave. As one respondent expressed, "those businesses with the most family-friendly practices attract the best women leaders".

What governments can do

- Make available to women's organisations funding that can be used to build organisational capacity and resource training for organisations' present and future leaders. At present funding is available for projects targeting the general community rather than the personnel of organisations;
- Enhance strategies promoting women's equal opportunities. This would involve recognising and developing more effective responses to gender and racial/cultural discrimination;
- Resource and develop women's educational opportunities, recognising that education and training are the most significant opportunities identified in women's leadership pathways. In recognition of women's fragmented paid and voluntary work due to their caring responsibilities, programs should target those times in which women try to return to the workforce, by resourcing re-training programs, in tandem with good-quality affordable and accessible child-care;
- Establish a partnership with the business and women's voluntary sectors to develop more flexible and family-friendly workplaces.

What the AWC and women's organisations can do

- Work in partnership with the Office for Women to establish a registered national women's leadership training and mentoring body or alliance that offers and/or works with organisations to develop accessible, affordable training responsive to women's changing life circumstances and the needs of particular organisations. This would include a cross-cultural mentoring system for new arrival women.

The development of a registered national women's leadership training and mentoring body that can be accessed by all women's organisations offers the greatest opportunities to women's organisations. However organisations can also optimise their development of present and future leaders by sharing programs and facilities.

- Share with other women's organisations information about their training programs, so that successful programs can be adopted and adapted by other organisations;
- Share and co-facilitate formal training programs; including (where appropriate) regular training days for office-bearers/leaders followed by mentoring;
- Develop induction packages and/or sessions for new members and new leaders, including written specifications for leadership positions. These can also be co-developed with other organisations;
- Develop "buddy" systems to support and encourage new members and leaders;
- Establish shared facilities with other organisations for tele-conferencing, on-line mentoring and training: remote learning facilities, technicians, laptops;

- Identify, nurture and mentor potential leaders, offering a leadership career path within an overall succession plan;
- Consider a range of strategies to attract and retain younger women, e.g. changed meeting times and formats, co-leadership roles, issue-based programs.

The Australian Women's Coalition welcomes opportunities to work with government, business sectors and women's organisations on the recommendations from this report.

Appendix 1

Action Plan for Leadership Project in Consultation with the Office for Women and approved by Minister Julie Bishop

Topic

Examining Pathways to Leadership for Women in the Corporate, Government and Community Sectors of the Australian Community: Best practice for Recruiting, Developing and Retaining Women Leaders

Description

The project will include an evaluation by participants of leadership programs delivered by member organisations of all four secretariats and an analysis of key aspects of successful and not so successful outcomes for participants. Another primary consultation will examine the 2-way transfer of leadership skills between professional and community activities with some special emphasis on how community organisations recruit, develop and retain women in leadership positions.

In addition we will survey successful women in leadership to determine the positive and/or negative influences of training, mentoring and networking that were relevant in developing their pathway to successful leadership

Expected Outcomes

The main outcome is to determine what attracts women into leadership roles, how are the leaders recruited, developed and retained. This study will compare and contrast what pathways are conducive for women to overtly seek and accept invitations to act in leadership positions in all sectors of the Australian Community and to identify some specific and at times covert restrictions, blockages or life style obligations that limit the choices. It is expected some reasons and causes will be identified that demonstrate why some women choose or are forced to withdraw from leadership positions or resign completely from organisations. It is anticipated that some key aspects of successful leadership programs will emerge that can be used in developing, assessing and evaluating some leading practice models.

Proposed Method

The method will be to investigate recruitment, development and retention of women in leadership. The proposed approach is to examine leadership from three different perspectives.

1. Survey all member organisations of all four secretariats about their leadership programs and keys to successful programs. The emphasis will only have minimal focus on the organisation's evaluation of the program but instead will try to get the graduates to evaluate the short term and longer term difference that this specific leadership program made to their self confidence in applying the skills of the training to diverse situations in their lives, the benefits of mentoring both formally and informally they have actively continued to seek and what ongoing networks have they maintained.
2. The second element will focus directly on Women who came to leadership positions through their community work and how have these skills been transferred to their professional area of work.
3. The third area will focus on how professional women in leadership transfer those skills to community organisations. Part of gathering this material will come from direct interviews with successful women as they trace their own pathway to leadership and can evaluate what helped that progress and what did not.

Appendix 2

Australian Women's Coalition Action Plan May 2007

TOPIC	DESCRIPTION	OUTCOME	PROPOSED METHOD
<p>Examining Pathways to Leadership for Women in the Corporate, Government and Community Sectors of the Australian Community: Best practice for Recruiting, Developing and Retaining Women Leaders</p>	<p>An evaluation by participants of leadership programs delivered by member organisations of all four secretariats and an analysis of key aspects of successful and not so successful outcomes for participants. Another primary consultation will examine the 2-way transfer of leadership skills between professional and community activities with some special emphasis on how community organisations recruit, develop and retain women in leadership positions. In addition survey successful women in leadership to determine the positive and/or negative influences of training, mentoring and networking that were relevant in developing their pathway to successful leadership</p>	<p>The main outcome is to determine what attracts women into leadership roles, how are the leaders recruited, developed and retained. This study will compare and contrast what pathways are conducive for women to overtly seek and accept invitations to act in leadership positions in all sectors of the Australian Community and to identify some specific and at times covert restrictions, blockages or life style obligations that limit the choices. It is expected some reasons and causes will be identified that demonstrate why some women choose or are forced to withdraw from leadership positions or resign completely from organisations. It is anticipated that some key aspects of successful leadership programs will emerge that can be used in developing, assessing and evaluating some leading practice models.</p>	<p>The method will be to investigate recruitment, development and retention of women in leadership. The proposed approach is to examine leadership from three different perspectives.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Survey all member organisations of all four secretariats about their leadership programs and keys to successful programs. The emphasis will only have minimal focus on the organisation's evaluation of the program but instead will try to get the graduates to evaluate the short term and longer term difference that this specific leadership program made to their self confidence in applying the skills of the training to diverse situations in their lives, the benefits of mentoring both formally and informally they have actively continued to seek and what ongoing networks have they maintained. 2. The second element will focus directly on Women who came to leadership positions through their community work and how have these skills been transferred to their professional area of work. 3. The third area will focus on how professional women in leadership transfer those skills to community organisations. Part of gathering this material will come from direct interviews with successful women as they trace their own pathway to leadership and can evaluate what helped that progress and what did not.

Appendix 3

Women's Leadership Programs Project Successful Women Leaders Interview Questions

- A. Please interview three successful women leaders who have come in to leadership positions via community work/organisations about their leadership journey and the transfer of leadership skills to their professional/business/working lives.
- B. Please also interview three successful women leaders who have come in to leadership positions through their professional/business/working lives about their leadership journey and the transfer of leadership skills to community work/organisations.

-
1. Do you see yourself as a leader? (Please elaborate)
 2. How did you become a leader? (Describe your leadership journey and the key influences)
 3. Have you participated in formal or informal women's leadership programs? If yes, what were the most useful and least useful aspects of the program(s)?
 4. Have you been able to transfer the use of your leadership skills from your community work/organisations to your professional/business/working life? If so, in what way?
 5. Have you been able to transfer the use of your leadership skills from your professional/business/working life to community work/organisations? If so, in what way?
 6. Do you intend on staying in a leadership position(s)? (Please elaborate)
 7. Do you participate in women's leadership programs as a leader, teacher, mentor etc?
 8. What do you think are the key issues/factors for the successful recruitment, development and retention of women in leadership?
 9. Any other comments?

Appendix 4



Women's Leadership Programs Project Survey Questions

Please complete the following survey questions as they relate to each leadership program/initiative run by or within your organisation (both formal – eg, structured, and informal - eg, mentor, apprentice or 'shadowing' type programs/initiatives). Please answer as many questions as you can, as fully as you can.

1. Does your organisation run a formal and/or informal leadership program for women?

Formal / Informal (please circle)

2. What are the key features of your leadership program for women – i.e., content and structure? Where possible please include details of length and frequency of program, and structure in terms of % of formal learning and % of 'hands on'/mentoring etc)
3. Who conducts the leadership program (staff, volunteers, external consultants)?
4. How are participants recruited?
5. How many women have participated in the program (i) since program inception and (ii) within the last 2 years?
6. How is the program funded?
7. What are its most successful features?
8. What, if any, obstacles are there to the program's success?
9. In what way(s), if any, could the program be improved?

10. Any other comments?

Please ask three graduates or participants of your women's leadership program the following questions.

1. What was the most useful aspect of the women's leadership program?
2. Have you used any of the skills/experience from the leadership program in your work and/or community organisations? If so, how?
3. What, if any, was the least useful aspect of the women's leadership program?
4. What, if any, other influences (people, programs, initiatives, experiences) have had a positive influence on your leadership development?
5. Would you recommend the women's leadership program to other new/developing leaders?
6. Any other comments

Appendix 5

Australian Women's Coalition Women's Leadership Project

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS & INSTRUCTIONS FOR GROUP LEADERS

Please record:

Group Leader's Name:

Number of women:

List of organisations they represent:

Preliminary questions for group leader to ask, and count responses:

1. How many of you entered leadership positions in paid employment of some sort, before becoming leaders in voluntary organisations?
2. How many of you were first leaders in voluntary organisations and used this experience to become leaders in paid work?

Questions for discussion – Group leaders record main points of responses

1. When you first entered a leadership position what kind of support did you get? (mentoring, one-to-one discussions, etc)
2. Was it helpful? If so, how? If not, why not?
3. Did the support you had encourage you to develop your own approach?
4. What kind of support would you have found helpful?
5. What were the external factors that enabled you to take up a leadership position? (family, job, income, self-esteem, etc)
6. What were the factors in the organisation that encouraged you to take up a leadership position?
7. What were the factors in your life (family, job, income, self-esteem) that might have made it difficult for you to take up and retain a leadership position?
8. Sometimes the skills and experience women gain in leadership positions are lost to the organisation or community when they leave these positions. When you finished (or will finish) in your position would you consider taking up a position in a different type of organisation? Eg. Management Board
9. What might be some of the things that would stop you doing this?
10. What kind of program or information would support women to become members of management or community boards after being leaders in their own organisations?
11. Can you think of any other ways that women can continue to contribute to their community or organisation once they have left leadership positions in their organisations?
12. What other leadership opportunities are you aware of that you could take up?
13. How can organisations make the most of the experience and skills of their past leaders?
14. What does your organisation do to broaden the age of members?
15. Do you have any ideas about how to do this?
16. If you had to design the perfect leadership course or support what would it contain?

Appendix 6



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Women's Leadership Programs Project Interviewee Demographic Data Sheet

Please complete this interviewee demographic data sheet for each person interviewed as part of AWC's Women's Leadership Programs Project. Please also make sure each interviewee reads and signs the permission to use data collected form.

	Question	Response
1	In which state/territory in Australia do you live?	
2	In which country were you born?	
3	Other than English, what other language(s) is spoken at home?	
4	Please tick your age bracket:	
	under 30	
	30—34	
	35-39	
	40-44	
	45-49	
	50-54	
	55-59	
	60-64	
	65-69	
	70-74	
	75-79	
	80-84	
	85-89	
	90 and over	
5	Who else lives in your house? (Please list – eg, partner, children, other family members, friends etc.)	
6	What is your employment status (please tick)?	
	In paid employment – full time	

	In paid employment – part time	
	In paid employment – casual	
	Self employed	
	On unpaid leave from paid employment	
	Not in paid employment	
	Performing voluntary unpaid community work	
	Other (please specify	
7	What is your occupation?	
8	Please tick your family income bracket.	
	Less than \$6000 per annum	
	\$6,001-\$20,000 p.a.	
	\$20,001 - \$40,000 p.a.	
	\$41,001 - \$50,000 p.a.	
	\$51,001 - \$60,000 p.a.	
	\$61,001 - \$70,000 p.a.	
	\$70,001 - \$80,000 p.a.	
	\$80,001 - \$90,000 p.a.	
	\$90,001 - \$100,000 p.a.	
	\$100,001 - \$150,000 p.a.	
	More than \$150,000 p.a.	