

2019 Dame Quentin Bryce Gender Equity Award

WINNER: Frasers Property Australia

Best of us

Origins and principles

Frasers Property Australia (FPA) is a leading diversified property group with a rich history dating from 1924. The motivation behind the Best of Us initiative was to improve the day to day experience of working at FPA for women; for organisational culture to be more inclusive and equitable and one which supports working women to be the best version of themselves; and to increase the representation of women in roles of impact and leadership.

For the WGEA Reporting period 2014/2015, females comprised 33.3% of total workforce, with a 23% representation in managerial categories. There was no female representation at Key Management Personnel (Executive Team) level. Accordingly, there was a lack of diversity of thought, shared experiences and role models. With this as the starting point, the challenge was to create meaningful and robust policy and business change to facilitate and support the goal of increasing female representation, particularly in roles of impact and influence in a non-traditional business sector.

Ultimately, the aspiration was to 'increase the number of women employed at Frasers Property to reflect communities and customers, and to ensure that women are represented in roles of impact and leadership in the business.'

Implementation

A series of culture initiatives and programs were implemented including policy development, education and training of staff, especially leaders and the implementation of targets and measures to track these. The approach has been inclusive and engaged employees and has included the work being done by the Property Male Champions of Change (PMCC). of which the FPA CEO is a member.

In 2015, the Property Council of Australia (of which FPA is a member), founded the PMCC. This provided a common ground approach to addressing these challenges as an industry, whilst working within scope and structure that is respectful of each individual organisation. As a result of this, CEO Rod Fehring was and continues to be an active member of the PMCC and using a top down approach the organisation has been able to engage with the team and develop policies, work practices and a culture where gender equity is not only accepted but openly embraced across all levels

Such change needed to be driven and motivated from top down, but also needed to be influenced and tailored for its respective audience. To this end, the Gender Equity Council (GEC) was founded in 2016. Chaired by the CEO, thus providing a direct link back to the works being undertaken through the PMCC and to foster a top down supportive mandate, this national group aimed to provide a regular forum to drive improvements in the approach to workplace gender matters.

Looking at industry trends and leveraging involvement with the PMCC to set priority areas, FPA then set about engaging across various levels of the organisation and industry to better understand key areas of influence and drivers that would provide necessary support and vehicles to move female representation in an upward direction. Focus was placed on roles of influence and impact and non-traditional roles.

Before any change could be considered and actioned leaders and influencers needed to be aware of their own unconscious bias. In partnership with specialist organisation Symmetra, a journey was undertaken with all leaders and influencers. Awareness and acceptance of unconscious bias was an initial key to then step into action. Continuing this path, fresher training for all managers and newly appointed or promoted managers is provided every two years.

The GEC has aided in refining and creating workplace policies, practices and culture that have produced the following results:

- A formalised approach to flexible work practices, adopting an all roles flex approach and a requirement for all managers to consider applications for flexibility on this basis. In the two years since its introduction, there has been an increase in discussions around flexibility and employees adopting a flexible approach to work.
- Technology has been embraced as a key enabler to many forms of flexible work and has been invested in accordingly.
- Parental leave and other family related entitlements have been increased to aid both male and female employees assume caring responsibilities of their newborn children and to ensure a smoother transition back into work. Male employees are actively encouraged to take primary parental leave - as a result challenge the norm, which is the spirit of enabling gender equity.
- A Graduate program targeted at 75% female participation into traditionally male dominated roles. This is a medium to long-term initiative to create a pipeline of talent that will be skilled and job ready for roles of impact and leadership.
- Domestic and Family Violence Support Policy - introduced acknowledging the importance of a supportive environment to those living in these circumstances to ensure that they maintain independence, a sense of worth and remain active in the workforce.
- Gender equity targets (40% female representation at CEO – 3 by 2020) are included in broader business strategies and in the KPIs of the CEO, executive team and general managers.
- Targeted approach to Development Planning, seeking a 40 | 40 | 20 approach whereby 40% are male and female and 20% are discretionary,
- Organisational Culture Indicators to aid in understanding progress. Feedback received during the February 2019 culture survey will be used as a base line for future surveys that occur every two years.

Other initiatives include mentoring for mid to senior female employees, sponsorship of women in 500 Women in Property Program, Compass – development program for women, general L&D with adequate representation of women, gender neutral approach to recruitment advertising, whilst leveraging benefits that aid in gender diversity (parental leave, flexible work options etc), leveraging industry networks and playing an active role in such committees as Diversity Committees for key industry bodies of Property Council of Australia and Urban Development Institute of Australia in all states in which we operate, Property Council Male Champions of Change and Women in Industrial.

Benefits and Outcomes

In February 2019, FPA achieved WGEA citation as an Employer of Choice for Women. This citation recognises implementation of a series of workplace initiatives, policies and practices that have improved the workplace culture to one that is inclusive equitable for women. WGEA Manager categories have increased in female participation from 23% in 2014/2015 to 35 % in 2018/2019.

FPA are pleased with progress across all management levels, with substantial growth at key management and other exec/general managers. The slight overall decline at senior manager level is balanced by the increase in female representation in other executive/general managers. Investing in

female talent, providing pathways, implementing effective and targeted policies and practices, combined with challenging the norms are resulting in positive outcomes.

There has been an increase in men taking primary parental leave. This has gone from, zero participation in 2014/2015 up to 9 in 2018/2019 and it is expected this will continue to grow. The men taking leave have included those in senior and/or leadership roles. Men taking primary parental leave as a single block is critical in normalising parental leave and equalising the impact taking parental leave has traditionally had on women.

As part of the successful WGEA Employer of Choice Citation and ongoing commitment, FPA incorporated the following 2 questions in Culture Surveys and have seen excellent results. In 2019, 86.24% of employees (up from 81.45% in 2017) agreed they had “the flexibility to manage my work and caring responsibilities/other commitments.” This is well above the 65% threshold required by WGEA. In 2019, 90.4% of employees agreed that their “immediate supervisor genuinely supports equality between men and women”. This is also above the 65% threshold required by WGEA.

Ad hoc flexible arrangements have been normalised with both men and women accessing these for family and personal responsibilities as required. These conversations are no longer considered exceptions but rather the norm and accessibility and acceptance has followed suit.

The first year Graduate Program (2017) intake resulted in 75% participation from women, 2018 80% and 2019 intake 100%. These are for construction/development roles only thus enabling a pathway for future growth into roles of influence and impact where greater gender equity is required.

The targeted approach to Development Planning has resulted in a current 59% female participation rate in High Performance/High Potential targeted development program. This is a significant increase from 2016 participation which was 37% female and 63% male.

The Senior Leadership Development Program aimed at those employed in general manager roles currently has 30% female participation. This program has enabled female talent to be nurtured and profiled appropriately with male colleagues. Acknowledging the value of creating and embracing diverse and inclusive teams (including gender) is underpinned by a one-day workshop centred on “Inclusive Leadership”.

The progressive and supportive approach to domestic and family violence is positively received by employees and further reinforces the culture of being supportive and having a genuine care for people. In the 2019 Culture Survey when asked “My organisation supports employees who are victims of domestic and family violence” 86% of our employees agreed. The organisation is passionate regarding the importance of further reinforcing commitment to zero tolerance of violence against women via their current White Ribbon Accreditation journey.

Achievements to date in provided FPA with the confidence and proven commitment to apply for and successfully achieve WGEA Employer of Choice accreditation in early 2019. Workplace culture is formally measured every two years and this opportunity has been utilised to better understand gender drivers.

Industry involvement has resulted in nominees for diversity committees for key industry bodies across all states, including founding member for Women in Industrial. These bodies aim to provide opportunities to increase diversity within the industry with an initial focus on gender. FPA are a proud national sponsor of the UDIA & Frasers Property Australia Women in Leadership Award.

Summary

FPA sought to establish a workplace culture that values gender equity and broader inclusion. They recognised this is a continuous journey where the bar is lifting. Ultimately, the organisation has achieved a greater and enhanced understanding of the value of a gender inclusive workforce, which will be extended to broader inclusive strategies in the future.

