



WOMEN IN INDUSTRIAL

**THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS**

**A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF METHODS TO IMPROVE  
FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRIAL  
PROPERTY AGENCY**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- In March 2022 Women in Industrial (WiN) engaged a team of research consultants to undertake a review of female representation within industrial property agency (**the review**).
- The research team engaged on this project was comprised of Mr. Christopher Murphy and Ms. Stefanie Gaspari.
- This report outlines the research methodology used in undertaking the review and outlines the literature that the reviewers examined in undertaking the review.
- A series of programs and initiatives have been formed across the property sector, in an effort to improve female representation. To date, these programs have largely been concentrated within the residential and commercial property segments. Women continue to remain underrepresented within the industrial sector, specifically industrial agencies.
- According to data provided by WiN, female agents within the industrial property sector make up less than 4% of total agents. This is an extremely sobering statistic.
- The business case for diversity and inclusion continues to gain momentum. Research from McKinsey & Company highlights that companies in the top quartile of gender diversity are 15% more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry median.
- A more recent report released by the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre and the Workplace Gender Equality Agency reveals a causal relationship exists between the increase in the number of women in key decision-making positions and subsequent improvements in company performance.
- The reviewers have authored two case studies; (i) the Australian Legal Fraternity and (ii) Women in Construction. Insights from these case studies have been incorporated into the analysis and recommendations provided herein.
- The reviewers designed a mixed-methods research methodology, which was agreed with WiN prior to commencement of the review. Mixed-methods is a research design methodology that relies on philosophical assumptions and methods of inquiry. Philosophical assumptions guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative data. Central to a mixed-methods study is the premise that the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches allows for a better understanding of research problems that either approach alone.
- This report enumerates a series of targeted recommendations which, if actioned, will help WiN strengthen its vision to promote industrial property as a sector of choice for women.
- The reviewers thank the interviewees for their time and generosity in sharing their experiences — and the WiN agency committee members and member organisations for the leadership they are showing in seeking to proactively tackle this important issue.

## INTRODUCTION

In March 2022 Women in Industrial (WiN) engaged a team of research consultants to undertake a review of female representation within industrial property agencies (the review).

The purpose of the review was twofold. First, the review sought to understand, in a more comprehensive manner, what attracts female talent to the industrial property sector. Second, the review sought to understand what barriers existed for female representation, specifically within industrial agencies.

The research team engaged on this project included Mr. Christopher Murphy and Ms. Stefanie Gaspari. Mr. Murphy is an Associate Lecturer at the University of Sydney Business School, where his transdisciplinary research focuses on organisational theory and strategic management. Mr Murphy's research draws on theories from analytic philosophy and sociology in an effort to better understand social and communication processes within organisations. Ms. Gaspari is a Casual Academic at the University of Sydney Business School. Her research interests focus on organisational psychology and how design thinking impacts organisational transformations.

This report outlines the research methodology used in undertaking the review and outlines the literature that the reviewers examined in undertaking the review. Further, this report explores how analogous industries have sought to address female representation within, where it has been identified as an issue of concern. Finally, this report enumerates a series of targeted recommendations which, if actioned, will help WiN strengthen its vision to promote industrial property as a sector of choice for women.

## OVERVIEW: WOMEN IN PROPERTY

It is well known that property has traditionally been a male-dominated industry. Notwithstanding this fact, the property industry has been engaged in a conversation about gender diversity for several years now.

A survey of more than 3,800 employees across 18 property companies in Australia found that although women make up more than half (52%) of non-leadership roles across the property industry, they hold only 28% of leadership positions<sup>1</sup>. This gender disparity is not unique to the property industry in Australia, with similar research conducted in the UK highlighting male leaders in real estate outweigh female leaders by three to one<sup>2</sup>.

To increase female representation and achieve leadership parity, initiatives such as the 40:40:20 talent pool target issued by the Champions of Change Property group, and the Property Council of Australia's 500 Women in Property program, have been established.

While these (and other programs) are playing a significant role in driving female representation and to closing the gender pay gap, our research indicates this progress is limited to property sectors like residential and commercial. Women continue to remain underrepresented within the industrial sector, specifically industrial agencies.

According to data provided by WiN, female agents within the industrial property sector make up less than 4% of total agents — a sobering statistic. This data suggests there is still much work to do within the property industry to support gender diversity and inclusion across the sectors, and this is repeatedly acknowledged in the interviews included in this report.

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<sup>1</sup> Property Council of Australia and EY, 2016, Grow the talent pool.  
[https://www.propertycouncil.com.au/Web/Content/Media\\_Release/National/2016/Property\\_Council\\_and\\_EY\\_release\\_ground\\_breaking\\_gender\\_profile\\_report.aspx](https://www.propertycouncil.com.au/Web/Content/Media_Release/National/2016/Property_Council_and_EY_release_ground_breaking_gender_profile_report.aspx)

<sup>2</sup> Real Estate Balance and PwC, 2019, Fast-tracking gender balance across real estate  
<https://www.pwc.co.uk/real-estate/assets/documents/fast-tracking-gender-balance-across-real-estate.pdf>

## WHY REFORM: THE CASE FOR DIVERSITY

The business case for diversity and inclusion is gaining increasing visibility, with empirical evidence showing companies with more diverse leadership teams see improved financial performance.

Research from McKinsey & Company found that companies in the top quartile of gender diversity are 15% more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry median<sup>3</sup>. While a more recent report released by the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre and the Workplace Gender Equality Agency reveals a causal relationship exists between the increase in the number of women in key decision-making positions and subsequent improvements in company performance<sup>4</sup>

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*“An increase of 10 percentage points or more in the share of female key management personnel lead to a 5.8 per cent increase in the likelihood of outperforming their sector on three or more metrics” - BCEC: WGEA, 2020*

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Aside from the financial benefits, the business case for diversity offers other less tangible, but just as important, components such as increased levels of employee engagement and talent retention, improved reputation, and employer brand<sup>5</sup>, and higher innovation outcomes.<sup>6</sup>

It is important to acknowledge that the Australian property industry, and specifically industrial agency, is not alone in its desire to address gender diversity.

Many Australian industries have been introspective, and are attempting to address systemic and structural issues of gender representation. It is the view of the reviewers that there are lessons that can be learnt from analogous industries, where conditions of employment, skills and working styles are consistent with those of industrial agents.

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<sup>3</sup> McKinsey & Company, 2015, Diversity Matters  
<https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/mckinsey/business%20functions/people%20and%20organizational%20performance/our%20insights/why%20diversity%20matters/diversity%20matters.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre (BCEC) and the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), 2020, Gender Equity Insights 2020: Delivering on Business Outcomes  
<https://www.wgea.gov.au/newsroom/more-women-at-the-top-proves-better-for-business>

<sup>5</sup> FDC Award for Diversity – this award recognises and promotes the positive contribution made by organisations that demonstrate a holistic and long-term commitment to diversity within the property industry.  
<https://innovationawards.propertycouncil.com.au/categories/award-for-diversity-2/>

<sup>6</sup> Boston Consulting Group, 2018, How Diverse Leadership Teams Boost Innovation  
<https://www.bcg.com/publications/2018/how-diverse-leadership-teams-boost-innovation>



For that reason, the reviewers have authored two case studies; the Australian Legal Fraternity and Women in Construction. The findings of these case studies have been incorporated into the analysis and recommendations provided herein.

## Case Study 1 - Australian Legal Fraternity

In 2021 the Australian legal profession reached a milestone of historical significance. For the first time in Australian history women comprise a greater proportion of admitted solicitors than men, across all Australian state and territory jurisdictions.<sup>7</sup> Statistically, however, whilst women are entering the legal profession at greater rates than men, they are leaving the profession earlier and remain underrepresented as senior members of the legal fraternity. Women comprise just 2% of the legal workforce aged 65+ and women represent only 30% of partners within Australian law firms nationally. Further, when examining partnership data in closer detail it becomes evident that women comprise only 26% of equity partners but 39% of salaried partners, indicating that 'true' partnership representation is lower than 30% once consideration is given to salaried roles only.<sup>8</sup>

Examination of literature regarding female representation in a legal setting gives rise to four main observations:

### **a. Representation of women decreases with seniority**

In 2011 women accounted for 46% of the Australian legal workforce. By 2021 this number had increased to 53%, highlighting that female entry into the legal profession is greater than male. Between 2011 and 2021 the number of male lawyers grew by 26% whilst for women it grew by some 67%. This disparity is due to the difference in the number of women studying law at university and entering the profession at higher rates than men.

A 2018 report by the Grattan Institute found that women have made up a majority of university students in Australia since 1987, and that female law graduates have outnumbered male law graduates in Australia since 1993.<sup>9</sup> Women are overrepresented at junior levels within the legal setting, however, their representation decreases with seniority. As stated earlier herein, women comprise only 2% of the legal workforce aged 65+ and women represent only 30% of partners within Australian law firms nationally.

### **b. Attrition is greater for female solicitors than men**

There are many factors that influence female attrition within the legal workforce. Literature suggests that one of the main contributory factors is 'how work is done'. Within law it is commonly accepted that there is an over-reliance on facetime and being available 24/7, as well as the expectation of working significant overtime.

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<sup>7</sup> Lauren Croft, 2021, 'There is clearly a problem with women getting into and staying in senior positions', *Lawyers Weekly*, Accessed online 1 September 2022, <https://www.lawyersweekly.com.au/biglaw/32517-there-is-clearly-a-problem-with-women-getting-into-and-staying-in-senior-positions>

<sup>8</sup> Women Lawyers Association of New South Wales, (2021), *Law Firm Comparison Project*, Accessed online 1 September 2022, <https://womenlawyersnsw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/2020-21-WLANSW-Law-Firm-Comparison-Project-Report.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Grattan Institute, 2018, *Mapping Australian higher education 2018*, accessed online 31 August 2022, <https://grattan.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/907-Mapping-Australian-higher-education-2018.pdf>



Further, flexible working is still viewed as the exception rather than the rule - forcing lawyers to choose between family and work as binary options.<sup>10</sup> Whilst women are entering the workforce at greater rates than men they do not progress to senior ranks as quickly as men, and many women choose to change industries when starting a family.

### ***c. Female representation is skewed to specific legal settings***

When examining contextual data, it is evident that women remain overrepresented in specific legal settings, when compared to their male peers. Data from the NSW Law Society highlights that women comprise 68% of the 10,280 solicitors practising in Government law and 60% of the 13,359 solicitors practising in corporate legal practice. Women, however, account for only 48% of the 56,180 solicitors practising in private practice.<sup>11</sup> This may give rise to conclusions about the suitability of a private practice setting for women, given that women disproportionately assume child rearing and familial caring responsibilities.

### ***d. Female lawyers are paid less than men***

Data from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) highlights that the gender pay gap across all sectors is approximately 14.1%. WGEA data highlights that within the legal services industry the pay gap is as great as 25.3%.<sup>12</sup>

## **Key findings – Case Study 1**

In preparing this report the reviewers examined the gender equity policies of twenty of Australia's largest law-firms to understand how those firms are seeking to address localised issues of female representation. A mapping and categorisation activity was undertaken of those policies in an attempt to identify commonalities and isolate key themes.

The outputs of this analysis highlight that the actions of the Australian law firms can be summarised into seven discrete categories: gender targets, role modelling, sponsorship, agile work, inclusive leadership (including addressing unconscious bias), parental leave and allyship. These categories have been used as the basis for further analysis later herein and have shaped the recommendations that the reviewers have provided to WiN.

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<sup>10</sup> Lauren Croft, 2021, 'There is clearly a problem with women getting into and staying in senior positions', *Lawyers Weekly*, Accessed online 1 September 2022, <https://www.lawyersweekly.com.au/biglaw/32517-there-is-clearly-a-problem-with-women-getting-into-and-staying-in-senior-positions>

<sup>11</sup> NSW Law Society, 2022, Gender Statistics, <https://www.lawsociety.com.au/advocacy-and-resources/advancement-of-women/gender-statistics>

<sup>12</sup> Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 'Gender Pay Gap Statistics', August 2022, <https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/GPG%20Factsheet%20Final%20August%202022.pdf>

## Case Study 2 - Women in Construction

Examination of the literature regarding female representation in the construction industry highlights three key barriers to female attraction and retention:

**a. A failure to promote the construction industry as a viable career option to girls in schools, particularly a career in trades**

Young women have little to no exposure to the construction industry or other women (teachers and mentors) who are in trades while at school<sup>13</sup>. Despite an ongoing commitment by the Australian Government to advance women in STEM, as at February 2022 women make up only 16% of Australia's STEM-skilled workforce<sup>14</sup>.

While some schools are providing more vocal and positive encouragement to girls about STEM subjects, girls seeking a career in the construction industry are likely to be steered towards university focused programs rather than trades. Still, research exploring STEM education as a career path for young women suggest one of the biggest barriers to female representation is the continuous perception of such programs as male-dominated<sup>15</sup>.

**b. Women and are more likely to be employed in ancillary roles and are paid significantly less than men/**

In Australia, women make up 13% of the construction workforce, with the majority working in administration and support roles (as opposed to trades). In New South Wales women represent 5% of the construction workforce<sup>16</sup>, while in Victoria this number is a mere 2%<sup>17</sup>.

Data from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) highlights that out of nineteen industries Construction has the widest gender pay gap and is the fifth most gender-segregated industry. By comparison, Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services is ranked fourth highest by gender pay gap and the tenth most gender-segregated industry<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Butler, E, Woolley, R, Shewring, F, & Women in Adult and Vocational Education (WAVE) (2011) I can't think of any occupation women can't do!: career pathways for women and girls: emergent and non-traditional occupations and industries (viable work), WAVE, Australia  
[https://wave.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/ButlerWoolley\\_2011\\_I-Cant-think-of-any-occupation-women-cant-do\\_ViableWork\\_eS4W\\_WAVE-ViableWork\\_report\\_Final\\_June2011.pdf](https://wave.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/ButlerWoolley_2011_I-Cant-think-of-any-occupation-women-cant-do_ViableWork_eS4W_WAVE-ViableWork_report_Final_June2011.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Australian Academic of Science, 2022, How women and girls are transforming STEM  
<https://www.science.org.au/news-and-events/news-and-media-releases/how-women-and-girls-are-transforming-stem>

<sup>15</sup> Lee, J. A. 2008. Gender equity issues in technology education: A qualitative approach to uncovering the barriers. Ed.D., North Carolina State University.  
<https://repository.lib.ncsu.edu/bitstream/handle/1840.16/5349/etd.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

<sup>16</sup> NSW Government, 2022, \$20 million to help women smash the gyprock ceiling  
<https://www.nsw.gov.au/media-releases/20-million-to-help-women-smash-gyprock-ceiling>

<sup>17</sup> VIC.GOV.AU, 2022, Victoria's Women in Construction Strategy  
<https://www.vic.gov.au/victorias-women-construction-strategy>

<sup>18</sup> Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2022, Australia's gender equality scorecard  
[https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020-21\\_WGEA\\_SCORECARD.pdf](https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020-21_WGEA_SCORECARD.pdf)

### ***c. Female attrition is often a result of gendered violence and/or rigid work practices***

The construction industry is often documented as a traditionally masculine or sexist culture where women are excluded and/or made to feel unwelcome — commonly known as a “boy’s club mentality”. Rates of gendered violence within the construction industry are reported as being particularly high for women workers and common behaviours include being overlooked for contracts and high rates of sexual harassment at work<sup>19</sup>. Studies have also found women will leave jobs in construction due to rigid work practices such as inflexible work hours and arrangements; a lack of access to paid parental leave or return-to-work provisions at a comparable position or pay scale; and a lack of support for caring responsibilities<sup>20</sup>.

### **Key findings – Case Study 2**

Right now there is a spotlight on female representation in the Australian construction industry. State governments and construction companies across all tiers are actively acknowledging a more diverse labour market is urgently needed to address skill shortages and lower the gender pay gap within the industry.

NSW State Government recently made a \$20.2 million commitment towards a goal to triple the number of women working in the construction industry by 2030<sup>21</sup>. Funding will be used to sponsor industry-led initiatives and provide targeted skills and training programs to encourage women to consider a career in construction.

Similarly, the Victorian Government recently announced the Building Equality Policy<sup>22</sup> which mandates targets for female representation in at least 3% of trade roles, 7% of non-trade positions and 35% of management, supervisor and specialist labour roles. The 2022 and 2023 calendar years will provide a two-year transitional implementation period with action on non-compliance effective from 1 January 2024.

Meanwhile, in a bid to improve industry conditions for all, construction companies across all tiers are following suit through:

- innovations to flexible working policies such as five-day working weeks on all new projects (in lieu of the industry standard six-day week)<sup>23</sup>;

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<sup>19</sup> VIC.GOV.AU, 2022, Victoria's Women in Construction Strategy  
<https://www.vic.gov.au/victorias-women-construction-strategy>

<sup>20</sup> Jones, Clayton, Pfitzner and Guthrie (2017) Perfect for a woman: Increasing the participation of women in electrical trades, Victoria University, Melbourne  
<https://tradeswomenaustralia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Women-Electrical-Trades-VU-October-2017.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> NSW Government, 2022, \$20 million to help women smash the gyprock ceiling  
<https://www.nsw.gov.au/media-releases/20-million-to-help-women-smash-gyprock-ceiling>

<sup>22</sup> VIC.GOV.AU, n.d., Building Equality Policy  
<https://www.vic.gov.au/building-equality-policy>

<sup>23</sup> Australian Human Rights Institute, 2022, Project 5: A weekend for every worker  
<https://www.humanrights.unsw.edu.au/research/current-research/project-5-weekend-for-every-worker>



- increased promotion to girls to consider a career in construction via fee-free courses<sup>24</sup> in construction, manufacturing, electrotechnology (electrician), plumbing, transport and logistics; as well as targeted school and university scholarships<sup>25</sup>; and,
- amendments to leave policies to ensure improved parental leave provisions (for both men and women) and ensure paid superannuation on all unpaid leave<sup>26</sup>.

Akin to the reviews examination of Australia's largest law-firms, there are key commonalities and points of intervention in Australia's construction industry landscape that have been used as the basis for further analysis later herein and have shaped the recommendations that the reviewers have provided to WiN.

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<sup>24</sup> NSW Government, n.d., Skills NSW - Built for women <https://skills.education.nsw.gov.au/initiatives/built-for-women>

<sup>25</sup> Australian Financial Review, 2022, Inside the push to make construction more female-friendly <https://www.afr.com/work-and-careers/workplace/inside-the-push-to-make-construction-more-female-friendly-20220616-p5au9h>

<sup>26</sup> Sydney Morning Herald, 2022, Men's parental leave profits all but some companies offer far more than others <https://www.smh.com.au/business/workplace/men-s-parental-leave-profits-all-but-some-companies-offer-far-more-than-others-20220309-p5a33s.html>

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The reviewers designed a mixed-methods research methodology, which was agreed with WiN prior to commencement of the review.

Mixed methods research is a research design methodology that relies on philosophical assumptions and methods of inquiry. Philosophical assumptions guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative data. Central to a mixed-methods study is the premise that the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches allows for a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone.

Mixed methods research requires a purposeful mixing of methods in data collection, data analysis and interpretation of the evidence. The key word is 'mixed', as an essential step in the mixed methods approach is data linkage, or integration at an appropriate stage in the research process. Purposeful data integration enables researchers to seek a more panoramic view of their research landscape, viewing phenomena from different viewpoints and through diverse research lenses.

In contrast, multimethod research uses a single research paradigm, either quantitative or qualitative. Data is collected and analysed using different methods within the same paradigm.

In undertaking these mixed methods review, the reviewers agreed a list of interview questions with WiN, and then posed these questions to sixteen interview subjects. Interviews were conducted over a 45-minute timeframe. The list of interviewees was agreed with WiN and was curated to ensure a broad range of participation. Organisational levels and functions were examined and stratified. The interviews were both recorded and transcribed.

## INTERVIEW FINDINGS

A total of sixteen semi-structured interviews, involving twenty participants across six categories, were undertaken over the period 29 June - 01 July 2022.

Overarchingly, participants told us that there is a bonafide commitment to changing female representation within industrial agencies (particularly within WiN member organisations) but pathways to achieving this are ill defined and there is an absence of coordinated action.

Category	Interviews	Participants
C1 Current Agent	4	5
C2 Agency and TR	4	7
C3 Former Agent	3	3
C4 Landlord	2	2
C5 HR/Recruitment	2	2
C6 Customer/Tenant	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>20</b>

**Table 1** Interview Subject Categorisation Summary

### What are the characteristics of top industrial property agents?

Participants were asked to describe the characteristics of top talent through a gender agnostic lens. The results to this question were illuminating. Over 90 per cent of interviewees used the words *Driven* and *Resilient* (or similar) to describe top industrial property agents.

Category 2 participants predominantly referred to characteristics stereotypically viewed as masculine in Western society using words such as *Assertive*, *Strong*, and *Confident*. They were also the only group of participants who referred to top agents as being skilled in business strategy and knowledgeable of the broader economic environment.

Participants in Categories 4 and 6 placed a higher value on research and relationships, describing top agents as “a trusted advisor” and “about more than just getting a deal done”.

Interestingly, both current agents (Category 1) and former agents (Category 3) repeatedly emphasised *Motivated*, *Hard Working*, and *Organised* amongst key characteristics. While it was only Category 5 participants who commented on personality traits such as extraversion and gregariousness.

### **What are the pathways to industrial property for women?**

The reviewers identified a surprising key theme amongst participant responses to what attracts female talent to the industrial sector. This was the fact that there is an absence of clearly defined educational (or other) pathways leading to employment within the industrial property sector, which results in many agents ‘falling’ into their roles.

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*“I think you'd find zero people wilfully enter the sector, most people fall into it” - Category 3*

*“Most people fall into industrial agency — it would be nice to see defined entry pathways into industrial agency” - Category 4*

*“No agent sets out to be an industrial agent — it's common to accidentally fall into it (regardless of whether you are male or female)” - Category 1*

*“If you look at the cohort of agents, people seem to 'fall' into agency” - Category 5*

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### **What are the barriers to attracting women to the property industry?**

To the average person, the industrial property sector is somewhat of an enigma. However, the review highlighted that, even within the property industry, the industrial property sector is significantly misunderstood and lacks a coherent brand identity.

Despite the fact that mainstream conversations about supply chain challenges caused by COVID-19 have placed a spotlight on the sector, participants stated training and development is required to change people’s perception about the sector and to better educate women about what roles within the industrial property sector actually involve. The notion that industrial is “*much more than just sheds*” was repeatedly mentioned by participants across all categories.

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*“Industrial is misunderstood. Would love a magic power to change people's perception about the industry and attract more women” - Category 5*



*“Get the word out there — no one came to school or uni to tell us about industrial as a career option” - Category 1*

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Another significant barrier reported by participants was the prominence and visibility (or lack thereof) of female role models. So few females — let alone females in senior leadership — within the industrial agency sector adds to the difficulty of attracting women to the industry and adds weight to the continuous perception of the sector as male-dominated.

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*“There needs to be more senior females in the industry, in order to attract more junior talent.” - Category 1*

*“Don’t know that there are any barriers other than the fact there are very few senior female operators, and that can be daunting for some women” - Category 2*

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### **What are the barriers to retaining women to the property industry?**

In synthesising participant responses to barriers to retaining women in the property industry, the reviewers noted three main findings:

- *Exclusionary cultural structures and the “boys’ club mentality”*

Both men and women, across all categories, cited a prominent boys’ club mentality as a deterrent to both attracting and retaining female agents within industrial property. Sadly, for many women exclusionary cultural structures are more than simply perception, with some participants noting lived experiences of othering, as well as sexist comments and innuendo.

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*“Industrial has always been a boys cub” - Category 1*

*“The boys club is not exclusive to industrial. The social culture across asset classes needs to be more inclusive. We need to think beyond golf days and boat parties” - Category 4*

*“We need to move away from male dominated activities that drive male attendance. Social and client events need a reframe” - Category 2*

*“I know too many examples of females experiencing microaggressions and everyday sexism” - Category 5*

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- *Remuneration policies and procedures*

A significant number of interviewees referenced the rigidity of remuneration policies and procedures, highlighting that they are a barrier to female participation. The reviewers identified that base salaries within the industrial property sector are significantly lower than industry standard, whilst total remuneration packages were higher than industry standard. This disparity is largely due to the fact that remuneration policies overwhelmingly favour 'bonuses' as a key behavioural incentive. Bonuses are calculated on a 'per deal basis' and as such are more favourable for people that transact more frequently.

A number of female interviewees raised that maternity leave policies were a barrier to employment, and a contributory factor in transitioning to roles outside of industrial agency. This was particularly true of interviewees who had recently experienced a maternity leave event. The procedural method of determining maternity leave entitlements, wherein it is calculated off of base salary that is exclusive of bonuses, was also raised as a key issue by a number of interviewees.

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*"It would have been easier to stay if my maternity leave pay included my bonus earnings in some way. It wouldn't necessarily have had to be all of it. Just some of it would have helped" - Category 3*

*"It is fair to say that I transitioned to a new role as a result of the fact that the maternity leave pay was very low" - Category 3*

*"We are increasingly asked about maternity leave entitlements at the time of interview, and once people learn that it is calculated on base salary only, they aren't interested in the role. Hardly surprising" - Category 5*

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- *Rigid work practices (family is an inhibitor for female agents, but not for male agents)*

The majority of participants indicated that having a family remains an inhibitor to retention for women but not for men. Many participants commented on the trend within industrial agencies to lose women at the juncture where they start their families, which was also reported to be often around the point they have sufficient experience to step into a leadership role, compounding the barriers to attraction aforementioned.

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*"Maternity leave arrangements are a very difficult barrier for women to get over. If you leave to have children you will lose momentum'. It is difficult to stay relevant and present in the market after taking 'time out'" - Category 1*



*“Hard to get longevity in an agency role for women when it comes to having a family etc. Hard to come back into the industry after having children. Hard to do it part-time” - Category 2*

*“You’re only as good as your last transaction - if you were out for a year you’d lose contact with clients, traction, market share and confidence. It’s a role of tenure that can’t be broken” - Category 2*

*“We just can’t seem to find a model that works to support female agents with children” - Category 2*

*“I earned \$400k in one year as an agent, but then earned \$60k the following year because I had a baby” - Category 3*

*“It is difficult to do this job and have a family. There is a significant amount of work to be done outside of business hours. There is no 9-5 in agency”  
- Category 1*

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### **If you could change one thing about the industrial property sector, what would it be?**

When participants were prompted to consider one key change about the sector, the reviewers noted stigma as a surprising revelation. Specifically, Category 1, 2 and 3 participants commented on the negative stigma of being an agent. The reviewers note this finding to be interlocutory with the aforementioned barrier to attraction that the industrial property sector is significantly misunderstood.

*“The stigma of being an agent restricts talent acquisition — please don’t throw us in the same pool as residential agents” - Category 1*

*“I hate the stigma that comes with being an agent. People can be successful, but they don’t need to be arrogant” - Category 3*

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Less surprisingly, almost all participants acknowledged there is still a way to go before the industrial property sector reaches true gender diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Categories 1 and 4, and Senior Leaders from Category 2 emphasised a desire for change to include more proactive diversity and inclusion initiatives.

*“I want to see a better mix of male and female. This is important for everyone. Our clients have this mix, and want to see it from us as agents”  
- Category 1*

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*“We need more male allies! Men need to take a lead in stamping out poor behaviour” - Category 5*

*“Gender diversity is a hot topic — but we need to move beyond: 'look at us, we have a girl, [and] we have a girl who is doing well'” - Category 2*

*“It’s time to transition to an industry that fosters, promotes and encourages flexibility” - Category 2*

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## OPTIONS FOR ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGE

In exploring options to categorise the issues identified by interviewees, the reviewers applied the employee lifecycle model. The employee life cycle model (ELC) is an organisational method used to visually represent how an employee engages with an organisation. There are five stages to the model: Recruitment, Onboarding, Development, Retention, and Separation.

The employee life cycle model is geared to encompass every stage of an employee's experience within an organisation. Through application of the ELC model the reviewers concluded that there were options available to employers at every stage of the ELC.

The reviewers also examined relevant literature, in an effort to understand different tactical responses that could be applied to address issues raised at each stage of the ELC. The tactical responses available to employer organisations were summarised into seven thematic categories. Figure 3 outlines the different tactics available to employer organisations.

# Employee Lifecycle Model

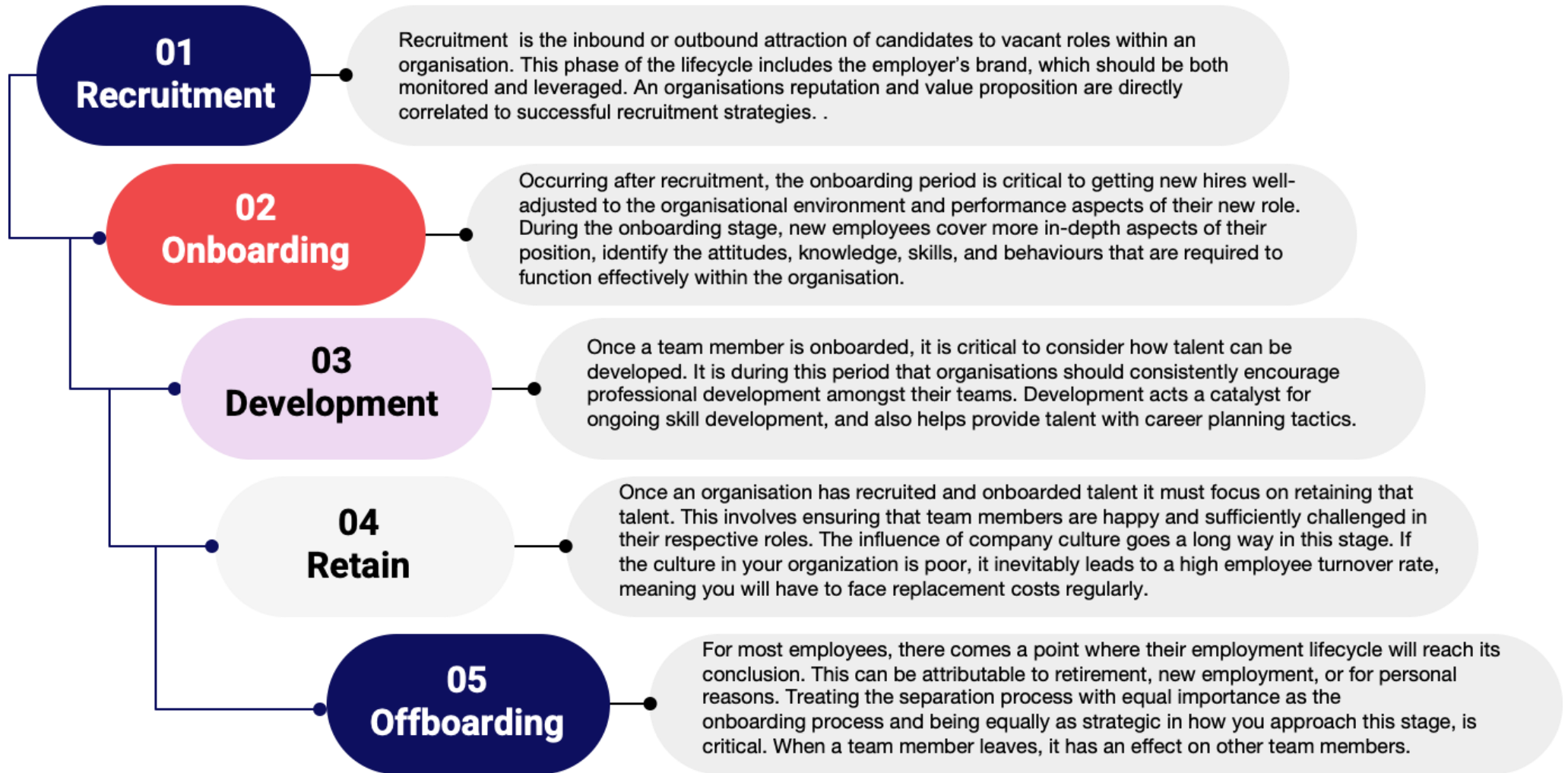


Figure 1 - Employee Lifecycle Model

# Tactical responses for employing organisations

## Role Modelling

Role modelling is a powerful teaching tool for passing on knowledge, skills, and values. People need to be aware of the behaviours they are required to model, and make a conscious effort to articulate what they are modelling. Behaviours should be both implicit and explicit.

## Flexible Working

A flexible work arrangement (FWA) is an agreement between a workplace and an employee to change the standard working arrangement to better accommodate an employee's commitments out of work. FWA's usually encompass changes to the hours, pattern and location of work.

## Parental Leave

In Australia, Parental leave is leave that can be taken after an employee gives birth, an employee's spouse or de facto partner gives birth or an employee adopts a child under 16 years of age. Parental leave is an entitlement that is provided by the Government and/or employers.



## Gender Targets

Targets are specific measurable objectives, generally set by an organisation at their own discretion, with discrete timeframes in which they are to be achieved. Consequences for not meeting a target may be set and enforced as the organisation sees fit

## Sponsorship

Implementation of a formal sponsorship program can be a critical step in improving diversity and representation. Sponsorship differs from mentorship in that it entails sponsorship entails externally facing support including advocacy, visibility and promotion.

## Inclusive Leadership

Inclusive leadership is emerging as a unique and critical capability helping organisations to adapt to changing and challenging environments. In this context, it is critically important that leaders are aware of bias – both conscious and unconscious.

## Allyship

Allyship is a lifelong process of building relationships based on trust and accountability. An ally is any person that actively promotes and aspires to advance the culture of inclusion through intentional, positive and conscious efforts that benefit people as a whole.

Figure 2 - Tactical responses for employing organisations

## Recommendations/Actions

The reviewers concluded that there are four action areas for employing organisations; Training and Development, Policies and Procedures, Gender Targets, and Flexible Working.

The reviewers have provided eleven targeted recommendations, each of which would address female representation in industrial agencies. Each of these are enumerated in greater detail herein.

### Training and Development

**Recommendation 1:** It is recommended that a review be undertaken of the training and development provided to industrial agents by their employers. The review should include assessment of training delivered at both entry level and experienced hire levels. Training should be amended to include cultural competency content, aimed at improving understanding of and practices associated with inclusive leadership, allyship and sponsorship.

**Recommendation 2:** It is recommended that a strategy be developed to address formal pathways into the industrial property sector, with particular emphasis on school and tertiary levels. The strategy should also seek to define a formal 'identity' for industrial property and/or agency.

**Recommendation 3:** It is recommended that a specific training module on inclusive leadership be developed, with particular emphasis on conscious and unconscious bias. Such a training module could be delivered by WiN directly or made available by a third-party organisation.

### Policies and Procedures

**Recommendation 4:** It is recommended that organisational policies associated with remuneration and parental leave be reviewed and amended where appropriate. Remuneration policies were not included as part of the review but were frequently mentioned by interview subjects.

**Recommendation 5:** It is recommended that remuneration policies should be amended with a view to improve base salary position for female employees on an ongoing basis, with particular reference to salary levels prior to and following parental leave arrangements. It may be appropriate to fix salaries at higher rates for new hires, rather than structuring remuneration to be reliant on commission entitlements.

**Recommendation 6:** It is recommended that parental leave policies be amended such that parental leave entitlements are not calculated solely on base salaries, rather that they give consideration to remuneration arrangements over a longitudinal time period and are inclusive of commissions.

## Gender Targets

**Recommendation 7:** It is recommended that formal gender targets be established for industrial agency teams. Targets should be calculated at both new-hire and experienced hire levels, and be both recruitment and promotion based.

**Recommendation 8:** It is recommended that it may be appropriate to extend targets beyond headcount and embed them within remuneration structures. This may assist in improving the appeal of the agency sector for female talent and retaining female talent on an ongoing basis. Remuneration structures may be amended to promote collaboration with female talent within agency teams, and foster a less-adversarial environment within agency teams.

## Flexible Working

**Recommendation 9:** It is recommended that flexible working policies be reviewed, in an effort to ensure that female talent is properly supported.

**Recommendation 10:** It is recommended that the structural arrangements for flexible working, including part-time and altered hours be encouraged and promoted. This may assist in retention of female talent following a period of parental leave, as re-entry into the workforce was identified by numerous interview subjects as a key structural issue.

**Recommendation 11:** It is recommended that male talent also be encouraged to work flexibly, in an effort to role model and entrench positive behaviour



## LIMITATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

At the conclusion of this report, the reviewers wish to formally note that this report has a number of limitations. Broadly, these limitations fall into three main areas:

**Limitation 1:** The recommendations within this report are limited by the interviewees made available to the reviewers. The interviewee population was provided by WiN directly to the reviewers. As a result, direct provision of the interviewee population may result in sampling error. Sampling errors occur when a probability sampling method is used to select a sample, but that sample does not reflect the general population or appropriate population concerned. This results in limitations commonly referred to as “sample bias” or “selection bias.”

**Limitation 2:** The recommendations within this report were directly impacted by the size of the interviewee population. Credible studies are based on sufficient sample data, and it is therefore important to have a sufficient sample size in order to draw valid conclusions. The larger the sample, the more precise the results of a study will be. It is important to note that 100% of interviewee responses were included in the derivation of recommendations.

**Limitation 3:** The time available to study a research problem and to measure change over time is a key constraint of this report. This report examined current employment figures, and interviewee subjects were in a ‘as-is state’. It is therefore difficult to adduce change in a longitudinal sense, to eliminate responses that could be reasonably regarded as outlier.

It is the aspiration of the reviewers that the contents of this report continue to inform discussions about tactical ways to improve female representation within the industrial property sector. The reviewers have tried to provide practical solutions that can act as a catalyst for meaningful and impactful change.

The reviewers wish to thank the interviewees for their time, acknowledging that this report would not exist without their willing participation.

The reviewers would also like to acknowledge the work of the WiN Committee and complement them on their efforts to drive purposeful change.

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