

# Why take the Panel Pledge?

*“One of the things I’ve learnt is that if you don’t intentionally include, the system unintentionally excludes.”*

- Elizabeth Broderick, Sex Discrimination Commissioner,  
Australian Human Rights Commission

# The problem



## Consequences of invisibility

The absence of women at public professional forums is a problem.

Because speakers are usually male, audiences are given a narrow perspective.

The lack of diversity limits the quality of the conversation and potential outcomes.

When visible role models are male, the absence of women perpetuates the problem; fewer women choose to speak, and fewer are chosen.

Without the opportunity for women to serve on panels as thought leaders, women lack profile-building speaking opportunities, an important contributor to experience and recognition.

# Where are the women?



**Less than 15% of  
panellists in  
Australia are women**

Many high-profile conferences, events and taskforces lack gender balance, despite there often being no shortage of qualified women.

While women make up 46.5% of the workforce in Australia, it is estimated that:

- less than 15% of panellists are women
- less than 12% of experts cited in business newspapers are women

Such optics have consequences.

# The solution – The Panel Pledge



Take the Panel Pledge

The Male Champions of Change, Chief Executive Women and Women's Leadership Institute Australia are committed to calling out imbalances and pushing for an improvement.

A positive action you can take to change the situation is the [Panel Pledge](#).

The “Panel Pledge” is effective and simple to implement.

# Taking the Pledge – You can advocate for gender diversity



## The Panel Pledge

- You will make it known that you will only support and attend events where a gender diverse panel or line-up of speakers is offered, or significant attempts were made.
- Whenever you are invited to be involved in or sponsor a panel or conference, you will inquire about the speaker line-up and organiser efforts to ensure women are included.
- Let organisers know that as a condition of acceptance, you expect women to participate in a meaningful way.
- Reserve the right to withdraw from the event, should this not be the case when the speaker list is finalised.
- Offer names of women from within your organisation or network who can be invited and, if helpful, point them to resources for support in finding women for the conference.

# Event organisers checklist



Strive to achieve 50:50 gender balance. Force the question – if we don't have gender balance, why not?

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Distribute topics so that women's voices are heard on "hard" topics, not just "soft" topics.

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Ensure speaker criteria are not inadvertently biased, e.g. in Australia limiting panel participation to CEOs or ministers leaves you with very few women.

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Book women speakers early – in case you need to change your approach to ensure gender balance.

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Ask around. – Women can be found, e.g. ask other panellists, industry insiders, specialist women's organisations. Google. Look at past conferences, government boards and industry associations.