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Male city-shapers to overcome systemic gender equality issues

Flexible work arrangements, sexual harassment policies, and ‘non-gendered’ parental leave are amongst the key policies identified in a first progress report published today [November 1st] by a group of top executives from some of Australia’s largest consulting firms seeking to address systemic gender equality issues.

The *Consult Australia Male Champions of Change* is a consortium of 12 Chief Executives and Managing Directors responsible for over 20 000 employees in the built environment, who co-signed a charter in 2016 to collaborate and advance gender equity and women in leadership. This landmark report publically details each firm’s progress on action areas around embedding diversity and inclusion, driving cultural change, and supporting women to leadership.

Peter Bailey, Chair of Consult Australia’s Male Champions of Change group, said: “As engineers, architects and planners we excel at connecting communities through road and rail, yet have struggled to connect fairly and equally with each other. We help build cities of skyscrapers and stadia, yet must do more to help build a society in which all can contribute on a level playing field. This is why we are committed to collaboration, publishing in–detail our progress on gender diversity and holding ourselves to account.”

The report shows strong progress on essential policies and practices - all have started or have in place flexible work arrangements, sexual harassment policies, pay gap redress, ‘non-gendered’ parental leave, and unconscious bias training. Stand out projects include:

- **Shared Care** provides a financial incentive for a partner to become a primary carer during a child’s first year of life. This gave Lindsay Klein’s partner a profound sense of empowerment when he came home and told her. “Suddenly our family had more options when it came to deciding who cares for our child.”
- **Sponsoring Women** matches senior males with high-performing females, connecting them to opportunities to advance their career. “It’s an important step in progressing women at the same rate as men who, for a long time, have benefitted from informal sponsorship,” said Patrick Hill.
- **Engaging Men** is a programme inviting male managers to deeply reflect on the benefits of gender equality-particularly for men; to learn about the systemic and cultural barriers that impede women’s progress; and to co-design solutions to overcome barriers and create equitable and inclusive cultures

Elizabeth Broderick, founder of the Male Champions of Change, said: “Gender equality is not sectoral or specific to one firm, it is a challenge for all of society. I commend the contribution of the Consult Australia Male Champions of Change. In business, they are the fiercest competitors, but on the issue gender equality they come together as one.”

Priority areas the firms are focusing on include engaging male middle managers in creating more inclusive workplace cultures and increasing the proportion of women at the most senior levels. Fifty percent of firms have measurable diversity targets in place, a figure expected to rise to 100% by 2018.

Megan Motto, CEO of Consult Australia, said: “Our Male Champions of Change are determined to get this right. We are implementing world-leading best practice, not setting impossible targets, but systematically making changes and committing to a better, fairer future for our industry through our actions.”

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. FOR MORE INFORMATION

- i. To arrange interviews with spokespeople, the 'Champions' in the report, or individuals detailed in the case studies below, please contact Kevin Keith on **0420 90 12 76** or kevin@consultaaustralia.com.au
- ii. Pre-records / interviews prior to the report's publication on November 1st welcome.
- iii. A number of opportunities will be available on November 1st at 2-30 pm in Sydney to interview / photograph all the Champions who have signed up to the report.
- iv. More details of each case study in 2 a, b, c below is available.

2. CASE STUDIES

a. Shared Care - Enabling men to step into the role of primary carer

Earlier this year, Aurecon become one of the first Australian engineering consultancies to institute a Shared Care policy. This gives families a new choice when it comes to considering who takes on child care responsibilities within their home. The scheme provides financial incentive in three scenarios, all of which apply during a child's first year of life: an employee who is the partner of a primary carer, can take over as primary carer and access Aurecon's paid parental leave if their partner returns to their own work; an employee receives 150% of their salary if they return to Aurecon and their partner is taking over as primary carer however can't access paid primary carer's leave through their own employer; both parents can access Aurecon's paid parental leave if both are employed with Aurecon.

Senior Civil Engineer at Aurecon, Lindsay Klein, will be stepping into the role of primary carer for his child next year in order to enable his wife to return to work. "My wife wanted to have at least a year off with our baby as we don't want to send her off to childcare so early. However, at the same time my wife would like to go back to work earlier as she feels she loses her skills as a psychologist the longer she is away from her profession. With the new policy, she can head back three months earlier and I can take over as primary carer."

Lindsay reports that his partner felt a profound sense of empowerment when he came home and told her about Shared Care. "Suddenly, our family had more options when it came to deciding who cares for our child..." ***More information available on request.***

b. Sponsorship - 'Sponsoring Women for Accelerated Success'

Engineering consultancy Jacobs is participating in a pilot programme 'Sponsoring Women or Accelerated Success' alongside GHD and AECOM. Three male sponsors and three female sponsees to help raise awareness and the need for more proactive intervention by senior leaders – mainly men – to advocate for talented women to create greater gender equality.

Sponsee Eva Wood, who leads about and leads around 200 staff said "Over the years it has been my informal sponsors that have pushed me to take on larger roles and also that have challenged me when I have perhaps not seen the depth of the opportunity in front of me. Sponsorship provides an opportunity to walk in others' shoes. I'm very humbled to have the opportunity to participate in this pilot program and I am looking forward to the opportunity to challenge myself, as well as learn how to establish a framework that I can use to sponsor and support others in their career advancement."

Unlike mentoring, which typically involves a manager providing professional development advice, sponsorship involves a senior leader advocating on behalf of a talented employee coming through the ranks. Sponsors are in a position to identify and allocate assignments that provide critical experience for advancement. In brief, mentors speak to you, sponsors speak about you.

Jacobs Vice President and General Manager, Patrick Hill said: 'I am delighted to formalize my role as a sponsor and believe it's an important step in progressing women at the same rate as men – who have for a long time benefited from informal sponsorship - to leadership positions.' **More information available on request.**

c. Engaging Men in Creating Inclusive Cultures: Arcadis Case Study

"In a male-dominated industry, where men still outnumber women in leadership positions, it's vital men are part of the solution," believes Greg Steele, Arcadis Australia CEO. "Shifting cultures requires the full participation of every member of an organisation, and particularly in our industry, that includes men."

At the CEO's invitation, Arcadis senior male managers participated in an interactive session to deeply engage on the issue of gender diversity and inclusion. The session explored questions such as: "What are the real benefits of greater diversity? How does this involve me? How will it affect my team? Our clients? What are the systemic and cultural barriers holding women back?" How might I be contributing to, or impeding progress?

Through a personal and reflective process, twenty-one managers proposed and committed to implementing a wide range of initiatives. Steele follows up quarterly with the participants to learn how things are progressing - e.g. an increase of women in our Regional Executive Team from 11% to 25%.

In the words of Belinda Virant Business Leader Infrastructure NSW she has seen a shift across the business. "I can see noticeable changes in the way that we are approaching diversity – including supporting and encouraging flexibility for all employees, in our recruitments process with prospective employees, and in considering people for promotions and career opportunities. The program will be rolled out in three other CAMCC firms (Douglas Partners, SMEC and Arup). **More information available on request.**

3. ABOUT CONSULT AUSTRALIA MALE CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE

The Consult Australia Male Champions of Change are leaders representing 12 firms in the built environment who have signed up to the Male Champions of Change (MCC) initiative:

AECOM Australia Pty Ltd	Beca	Jacobs
Arcadis	Calibre	Norman Disney & Young
Arup	Douglas Partners Pty Ltd	Rider Levett Bucknall
Aurecon	GHD Pty Ltd	SMEC Australia Pty Ltd

They initially came together in 2012 to address the dearth of women in our industry. Inspired by the Founding MCC group and united in our objective to improve the representation of women across all levels of our organisations, Consult Australia officially joined the MCC community in November 2016.

4. ABOUT CONSULT AUSTRALIA

Consult Australia is the industry association representing consulting firms operating in the built and natural environment sectors. These services include design, engineering, architecture, technology, survey, legal and management solutions for individual consumers through to major companies in the private and public sector including local, state and federal governments. We represent an industry comprising some 48, 900 firms across Australia, ranging from sole practitioners through to some of Australia's top 500 firms with combined revenue exceeding \$40 billion a year.