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### **Time to change Australia's perceptions of female leadership**

It is critical to Australia's economic and social growth that both men and women do more to develop future female leaders, said **Alison Watkins, Group Managing Director, Coca-Cola Amatil** and one of only four female CEOs in the top 50 ASX companies.

Ms Watkins was addressing an audience of more than 800 leaders from the corporate, government and non-profit sectors at the Chief Executive Women (CEW) Annual Dinner in Sydney tonight.

Ms Watkins, a member of CEW, described her 30-year career, spanning professional services, board and executive roles, as one characterised by her determination not to let down those people who took risks and gave her opportunities across many diverse roles.

"I feel a strong responsibility to be successful for all the women who will become CEOs in the years to come. It is how I will contribute to changing the perceptions of what a female leader is and to the day that will come when 'female CEO' doesn't evoke any particular perceptions at all," said Ms Watkins. She said it was critical that both men and women recognised the influence they can bring to bear in developing future female leaders.

"It's the way you are raising your children to understand they can do anything. It's the role you play as partner and parents, your decision to share the second shift at home. It's the way you make a difference to women in your workplace, the risks you take to create opportunities for them and help them succeed, including in line roles," said Ms Watkins.

**Christine Christian**, President of CEW, told the audience that Australians are living through a revolution around the status of women.

"The next generation will look back on everything that has been achieved around gender equality in the past five to 10 years and see it for what it is – nothing less than a revolution in the way the equal participation of women at all levels of society is accepted and supported.

"It is a revolution driven by more women taking on more senior roles, influencing decisions around management of the economy that is having the most profound positive effect on our society.

"I hope we will look back at our current status quo – the 18.2 per cent gender pay gap, the fact there are only seven female CEOs in the ASX top 200 – and consign it to history," said Ms Christian.

Funds raised at the dinner support CEW's annual program of 16 executive education scholarships for women. CEW is supported by the generosity of the following sponsors:

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**About Chief Executive Women**

CEW is the pre-eminent organisation representing Australia's 300 most senior women from the corporate, public service, academic and not-for-profit sectors. Its mission is "women leaders enabling women leaders". [www.cew.org.au](http://www.cew.org.au)