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How Treasury turned from a 'chess club' into a female-friendly workplace

• Launch of the Chief Executive Women Case Study report into creating gender diversity at the Treasury – Parliament House, Canberra. Tuesday, November 25 2014

• Treasurer, Joe Hockey MP; Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women, Sen. Michaelia Cash; Treasury Secretary Dr Martin Parkinson; RBA Board & CEW member Kathryn Fagg among the speakers

Canberra, 25 November 2014: The Treasury realised it had a gender issue in 2011 when a report analysing data on the recruitment and progression of women in the department presented Dr Martin Parkinson with some stark facts on why women were failing to move up into leadership roles.

The evidence was a shock to everyone on staff, from the top down, who until then had believed some persistent myths about Treasury: that it was a meritocracy; that robust debate meant anyone with ideas would be heard; that pay and promotion were always fair and transparent.

Inside Treasury the men blamed family responsibilities for women's slow progress in the organisation. Women, however, saw many other barriers. As one woman said: "Walking into Treasury is like walking into a chess club. It's a different type of masculine culture."

This case study by Chief Executive Women (CEW) spells out how Treasury turned its culture around by addressing the underlying problems holding back women in the department. And the result? The number of women in senior SES roles has grown from 22% to 33%; while at entry level the number of women has grown from 45% to 52%.

Dr Martin Parkinson, the Treasury Secretary said: "Progressing women within Treasury has been a priority for me. It was clear that for Treasury to remain high-performing, our organisation needed to be more inclusive. We needed to value diversity and complementary leadership. Every member of the Treasury team can be proud of our achievement."

Christine Christian, CEW President said: “CEW applauds the achievements of Treasury in managing the culture changes towards gender equity. As this work shows, creating gender equity is not just a corporate issue. Measures to support the greater participation of women at every level of workforces need to be addressed in all organisations, including government.”

Kathryn Fagg, chair of CEW’s Business Engagement committee, said: “Organisations come to us for practical examples of what has worked in Australian organisations to increase the number of women in leadership positions. Through the knowledge and experience of our members, as well as the research we have conducted over the years, Chief Executive Women knows what elements lead to a successful change program.”

“CEW’s case study brings to life the important changes at Treasury through the voices of its people. It shows how leadership can bring about the shift in attitudes and behaviours needed to create a more inclusive culture that allows both women and men to succeed,” said Ms Fagg.

In 2013 Dr Parkinson and other members of the Male Champion of Change group, collaborated with CEW to create a model called the [Leadership Shadow](#), which helps leaders everywhere understand the impact of their personal actions on creating gender balance. The Leadership Shadow’s key elements – what I say, how I act, what I prioritise and how I measure – have been used in this case study. A series of detailed interviews were also conducted with a range of Treasury employees and external experts and commentators.

There are lessons in this Treasury case study for every leader and every organisation trying to create real and positive change around gender diversity. They are that:

- There is no substitute for visible personal leadership;
- A critical first step is to seek a deep understanding of the views of women and men in the organisation;
- Making all leaders accountable for inclusiveness in their workplace enables greater momentum;
- Buy-in is required from all levels, not just senior management.

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Embargoed copies of the case study are available on request.

Kathryn Fagg is available for interview.

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About Chief Executive Women

[Chief Executive Women](#) is the leading organisation representing Australia’s most senior women leaders from the corporate, public service, academic and not-for-profit sectors. Their shared vision is “women leaders enabling women leaders”.