



Chief Executive Women

# BREAK<THROUGH>>>

Leadership Summit 2022



**CEW  
LEADERSHIP  
SUMMIT 2022**  
BREAKTHROUGH  
WHITE PAPER

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CEW would like to thank and celebrate all of the speakers, event organisers and guests who made the inaugural CEW Leadership Summit a resounding success.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and pay our respect to their Elders past and present. CEW celebrates the diversity of First Nations people and their continuing connection to land, water and community, and acknowledges the strength of First Nations women leading their communities. We extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are part of the CEW community.

# Introduction

The Chief Executive Women Leadership Summit, hosted on Tuesday, 6 September 2022, brought leaders together for an uncensored conversation about what can be done to break through the malaise and achieve gender equality for the benefit of all in Australia.

In a day of inspiring discussion and keynote speeches, attendees were left empowered to drive meaningful change in their respective industries with real life examples of 'what works' and practical ideas and actions that can be taken to accelerate progress toward gender equality.

Six key themes emerged from the Summit:

- Daring
- Stories
- Power and leadership
- Optimism
- Belonging
- Breakthrough

This white paper seeks to distil the rich discussions that took place at the Summit into tangible actions to realise CEW's vision of:

- Women leaders at every decision-making table
- Women are economically secure and safe across their life course
- Women's workforce participation enabled across all sectors
- Workplace flexibility for men and women to work and care



# Daring

**Kate Gilmore, Professor in Practice at the London School of Economics and Political Science, dared leaders to find the moral courage to “lead us away from unconscionable gendered inequalities”. Kate challenged leaders to be “courageous enough to stare down hate; not just challenge being left out”.**

She used a powerful metaphor of Tina Turner’s “What’s love got to do with it” and reminded us that what does gender have to do with it? Everything, and what’s love got to do with it? Everything.

Arguing that “failure to breakthrough gender inequality is not merely thanks to the actions of the bad but also the silences – and moral cowardice – of the better” Kate contended that change is a direct result of the courageous actions of daring leaders and inspired the audience to find the moral courage to lead in such a way.

She told us to be daring we must be troublemakers, agitators, and understand that we, as women, over history, have been boxed in, boxed out and boxed about. Women across the world, particularly women who experience intersecting forms of discrimination, face ongoing discrimination and in the face of that we must acknowledge our privilege. She went on to ask if we were ready to be equal? Prepared to dare to lead? Like many others, Kate reminded us that we can only begin to exercise moral courage by taking care of ourselves, which was a recurring theme among many speakers. “We must take good care of ourselves, physically, emotionally, and take care of each other. We must be daring but note how we support ourselves and others to be daring.”

Kate challenged audiences, in any position, to lead society away from gender inequality, proclaiming that “you don’t need power to lead, you need to imagine a different future”. To find the moral courage to dare to lead differently. Kate endorsed finding energy, renewing energy and seeing the bigger picture beyond oneself.

Solina Chau, Co-Founder of Horizons Ventures, Founder of H.S. Chau Foundation and one of Forbes Magazines 100 most influential women in the world, encourages women in her organization and in the start-ups, she works with to “not be intimidated by what [they] don’t know” and to “have the courage to say – ‘I would like to do this my way’”. For Solina, doing something ‘her own way’ often involved asking just the right questions even when she was not the expert in the room. She shared an anecdote where she was invited to invest in a future foods company, having much less scientific expertise than the founder. Nonetheless, through having the self-confidence to ask critical questions, Solina was able to change the dialogue and relationship. She ended with a powerful message that we must; “encourage self-confidence, we must not be intimidated by what we don’t know, and you must be courageous enough to do it your own way, or else we will be stuck talking about wasted potential again and again”.

## LESSON

**The resounding lesson is that to break through and drive change at pace, we must be daring in our approach. In the words of Kate Gilmore,**

“  
if you know you are not  
made for daring, please  
don’t dare lead  
”

# Stories

The power of stories dominated the Summit, the importance of women telling our own story and creating an inclusive space for others to share theirs.

Sarah Harden, CEO of Hello Sunshine, spoke about how our culture doesn't change unless we give women full authorship in how their stories are told and how in order to drive breakthrough change, we also need to amplify the stories of others.

Sarah began the day by emphasising that women's stories matter and that the system is rigged to downplay or marginalise those stories. She emphasised the importance of centering on women and other marginalised voices for authentic and powerful story telling. "If you centre women in authorship, you have a greater chance of resonating with women".

To demonstrate the power of our stories, she took participants to a deeply personal level of what she has experienced in the United States. Opening up about the betrayal of women at a deeply visceral and bodily level in the reversal of the Roe v. Wade supreme court decision. With a reminder that if we are not vigilant, we will lose autonomy over our bodies, our choices and our lives. On the back of this powerful moment, Sarah told the Summit to stand in our stories, our personal stories and the big stories we need to cover for others.

The power of story to connect was emphasised, learning each other's story, and respecting those stories is vital for breaking through. Hunter Johnson, Founder and CEO of the Man Cave, said that "we cannot hate someone whose story we know". Sex Discrimination Commissioner Kate Jenkins told participants there is "such little space between you and me, and our story sits in the middle of that. Rights stand between that – and we should never take those rights away".



"Our culture doesn't change unless we give women full authorship in how their stories are told."

Sarah Harden

## LESSON

The resounding lesson was that we must stand in our stories and in the big stories to breakthrough and move forward.

# Power and Leadership

**The CEW Leadership Summit focused heavily on power and leadership, power imbalance and misuse. Who has power? Who exercises power? Who misses out?**

There was an ongoing discussion on the power shift from bosses to employees. Ming Long, Diversity Council Chair, spoke about how we must reshape leadership to focus on service to our employees rather than requiring their service. At the Connect breakfast, the importance of leadership pipelines was emphasised. There was discussion of using experience of the challenges of pandemic, the climate emergency and our current economic environment as a catalyst for change. Marissa Warren, Co-Founder and General Partner at ALIAVIA Ventures, said that we should use our power and leadership to invest in women, invest in women founders; “your dollars make the future”.

Deliberate interventions, including gender targets and quotas, are required to increase women’s representation in leadership. Prime Minister of Australia, Anthony Albanese, championed the use of gender quotas to improve women’s representation in Parliament and highlighted the need for targeted policies to support women’s contributions to the workforce.

Sharing the results of the 2022 CEW Senior Executive Census, Bain & Company Partner, Agathe Gross, reinforced the need for targeted strategies to accelerate women into leadership positions. The 2022 CEW Senior Executive Census identified that “we are going nowhere fast”, as the number of companies with gender balanced leadership teams decreased in the past year, the number of women in CEO roles has not changed and the proportion of women in line roles, which are the dominant CEO-feeder roles, has increased by only 1%.

Agathe re-enforced the importance of target setting in corporate Australia, revealing that 35% of companies with 40:40 targets have achieved gender balance in their executive leadership teams, compared to only 8% of companies with no target. Additionally, she contended that in order to drive real progress in the near future, companies must implement deliberate strategies to increase women’s representation at the executive level, including holding executives accountable, ensuring that commitments translate into actions for all, targeted talent management, deliberate long-term succession plans and equitable recruiting.

## LESSON

**The lesson was that we must reshape leadership with deliberate investment and interventions to break through and advance women’s leadership.**



# Optimism, Action, Vigilance and Purpose

Solina Chau shared her optimistic outlook on the future, where attributes that are unique to women are celebrated in leadership and women are empowered and supported to have the confidence to lead in their own way.

Solina spoke about era-defining investments, as an optimistic global leader, and discussed investing at scale. She celebrated and honoured women's unique attributes – curiosity, intuition, bravery and not being afraid of who we are. She emphasised that we must not be intimidated by what, who and how much we do not know. Her story about soy sauce highlighted the importance of bringing value from your personal experience and holding yourself and your intuition in high regard. She also spoke about leading for the advancement of the future, not simply her own interests, and yet her success in that mission is truly inspiring. "I have had to eat a lot of humble pie to realise I didn't want to make others eat humble pie".

Vigilance was also a strong theme, and a constant message throughout the day was if we are not vigilant, whether that be international events, or removal of rights, or even in our personal experiences we will lose our progress and by extension, our autonomy. Wendy McCarthy AO was the embodiment of vigilance and purpose, action and optimism in her panel in the afternoon, as she highlighted the importance of never being complacent, and that every day is an opportunity for change.



## LESSON

The resounding lesson was to celebrate women's unique attributes, ourselves and our opportunity to break through and drive change.

# Belonging

In her closing comments, CEW President Sam Mostyn AO spoke about how we must stop speaking only about 'inclusivity and diversity' and instead speak about belonging. Who belongs in our world? Our Organisations? Our Communities?

Various speakers discussed how lonely it can be as a leader, whether as the only female on a board or leadership team, the only person of colour, person with a disability or other intersection, or as the only person advocating for meaningful gender equity change in an organisation. It is for this reason that women must support each other and engage allies.

Tanya Hosch, Executive General Manager, Inclusion and Social Policy at AFL, shared her experience in the leadership team at the AFL, revealing that when she joined in 2016 she was the second female on the AFL executive and the first Indigenous person ever. Sarah Harden spoke of a moment of driving to Hello Sunshine when she realised that for the first time in her career, she was not experiencing loneliness.

Sarah shared her experience of "the huddle" – the power of belonging to a network of supportive women who empower and inspire each other. Arguing that "huddling is our courage and bravery" that "makes breakthroughs possible", Sarah called audiences to huddle together, "with men and inclusively... with those who don't look like us or share the same lived experience". Sarah argued, that in order to create breakthrough change, women must support one another in the rise to leadership and inspire the next generation of women leaders to be bold.

Brendon Gale, CEO & Executive Director of Richmond Football Club, re-enforced the importance of belonging to unlocking the full potential of women, sharing his observation that "men need to play well to feel like they belong. Women need to feel like they belong to play well".

Kate Gilmore spoke about the universality of human rights and how they are sacred to all people; "rights are not some kind of beauty parade. Rights are for the best and worst of us, to the exclusion of none of us, in the interests of all of us". The advancement of human rights, and the advancement of women as a sisterhood is predicated on everyone working towards common goals that allow all women to thrive in their communities. Kate emphasised that we must; "have a bigger dream than individual advancement - don't hand over your self-esteem to the others, preserve it for the larger story".

Antionette Lattouf, Co-founder and Co-Chair Media Diversity Australia, highlighted this concept in her remarks and reinforcing a question that arose throughout the day – which women do we care about? In her closing comments, Sam Mostyn acknowledged with gratitude her privileged position and the importance of uplifting others. Sam made reference to single mothers fleeing violence, citing Anne Summer's report 'The Choice: Violence or Poverty'.

Grateful for the efforts of women that have fought for gender equality in the past, Solina Chau seeks to "make use of everything [she has]" in her position to help the next generation of women leaders build the self-confidence to lead. She believes that "women are natural born change agents" and derives immense joy from "finding smart women, finding the thesis, helping them build a team and serve... in a way that makes a fruitful investment".

## LESSON

The clear lesson was to "huddle" inclusively, that the power of belonging makes breakthroughs possible.

# Breakthrough

At the heart of the Summit, was the central theme of Breakthrough in all its forms. Solina Chau spoke of colossal breakthroughs, and to achieve great things you; “need loads of optimism, willpower and realism”. Tsehay Hawkins, Yellow Wiggle in The Wiggles, was celebrated as a breakthrough in her own right. She spoke about the power of her beliefs and her story to role model for young people in Australia and around the world.

**The overwhelming message of the Summit was that anyone can be a breakthrough agent. Many speakers emphasised the importance of choosing a laneway you are in to make your breakthrough.**

Wendy McCarthy emphasised that you don’t need to be polite to make change, and in fact emphasised that politeness can be a barrier in some instances. Sam Mostyn said not to be fearful of the stories you want to share, and to be mindful and compassionate to others in their breakthroughs. Sarah Harden started the day by saying “we just do what we do, and just by showing up, is almost miraculous” especially given the disadvantage many women experience. The day ended with great optimism and intent as leaders to move forward with compassion and as drivers and change agents performing breakthroughs in areas of business, community and policy. Sunita Gloster mentioned moonshots, and Sam Mostyn highlighted the importance of the moonshot concept, and quoted Mariana Monsaktao who said “the world only changes with a moonshot mission, grounded in where we want to go, when we are going to do it, and who we are going to bring along with us”.



# Actions to Breakthrough

At the Summit, we called on participants to drive action. This section outlines insight to inspire action within your sphere of influence.

## Women leaders at every decision-making table

- Set **ambitious gender targets** in your organisation
  - CEW and Bain & Company's Report [Take it from the Top: Accelerating Women's Representation in Executive Leadership](#)
- **Dare to lead differently** and challenge the status quo
- **Support a diversity of other women and inspire** the next generation
- **Offer women stretch opportunities to gain breadth of experience** to build the pipeline of women leaders
- Invest in **leadership development through** [CEW's Leaders Program](#) a bespoke development program encouraging women leaders to truly be themselves
- [CEW Senior Executive Census 2022](#)

## Women are economically secure and safe across their life course

- Ensure there is **pay equity** in your organisation
- **Hold individuals accountable** for inappropriate behaviour
- Apply [CEW's Respect is Everyone's Business toolkit](#)
- **Support women** breaking into male-dominated fields
- Support all carers with **superannuation during the paid and unpaid portion of parental leave**

## Women's workforce participation enabled across all sectors

- **Support women returning to the workforce** after parental leave or caring responsibilities
- Improve **access and affordability of childcare**
- **Role model to inspire the next generation** of women in your industry
- **Increase diversity** to unlock the full potential of high performing teams

## Workplace flexibility for men and women to work and care

- **Be mindful of biases** when managing a remote or hybrid workforce
- Ensure that those who work under **flexible arrangements are engaged and have the same opportunities** (e.g. access to mentoring)
- **Embed equitable flexibility for all genders** using best practices of CEW and Bain & Company's Equitable Flexibility and Flex for Success Reports

## CEW Leaders Program

Authentic leaders who lead with compassion and empathy, those that embrace ambiguity and those that seize every opportunity without reservation will be the next generation of executives. Our aim is to provide a leadership development experience that enables women to become those leaders and be ready to step forward with confidence. CEW's Leaders Program is a bespoke development program encouraging women leaders to truly be themselves. It is independent, intimate, challenging, collegiate, reflective in nature and designed and facilitated by CEW Members who share their wisdom and lifelong experiences. If you are looking to accelerate the development of women in your organisation, create a truly diverse and inclusive working environment or looking to simply invest in your own leadership development, this program is the right choice.

For more information, visit [CEW Leaders Program - Chief Executive Women](#)

## CEW Scholarships

The CEW Scholarship program is at the heart of CEW's mission of enabling women leaders. The program supports women leaders at critical junctures in their careers to accelerate their leadership and growth ambitions. The program targets mid to senior level women managers who are one or two steps away from the C-Suite or CEO roles. Scholarships are offered to international business schools anywhere in the world including Harvard, Oxford, Stanford and INSEAD. In 2022, the CEW program continues to thrive and is offering 16 scholarships with 31 available seats. CEW's investment in its scholarships program is underwritten by the generosity of corporate sponsors and individual scholarship partners, including CEW members and academic institutions.

For more information, visit [CEW Scholarships Program 2022 - Chief Executive Women](#)

## About the Authors



Chief Executive Women

## Women leaders enabling women leaders

Chief Executive Women's (CEW) shared mission is 'women leaders enabling women leaders'. CEW's over 900 members hold leading roles in Australia's largest private and public organisations. They oversee more than 1.3 million employees and \$749 billion in revenue. Member's organisations have a combined market capitalisation greater than \$1.144 trillion and contribute in excess of \$249 billion to Australia's GDP.

Since 1985 CEW has influenced and engaged all levels of Australian business and government to achieve gender balance. Through advocacy, research, targeted programs and scholarships, CEW helps to remove the barriers to women's progression and ensure equal opportunity for prosperity. CEW's members work actively to realise our vision of a community where women and men have equal economic and social choices and responsibilities. For more information, visit [www.cew.org.au](http://www.cew.org.au)

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