



MEDIA RELEASE

Sydney, Wednesday 3 February 2016

**Flexibility For All:
Barriers to flexibility still stand in the way of gender parity**

- Actively supporting flexible working models for both genders is key to supporting women's progression into leadership roles
- Negative perceptions discourage men from taking advantage of flexible work

In order to advance gender equality in the workplace, flexible work arrangements must be available to and actively supported for both genders. Currently less than 50% of Australian organisations have a workplace flexibility policy and even when such policies exist, there are barriers to effective utilisation.

The right culture and active support are fundamental to improving employees' experience of flexible working. Male and female respondents to the latest Bain-Chief Executive Women Survey agreed that proof of the potential to progress one's career, visible commitment by the CEO, leadership and colleagues, and respect for boundaries are the most important factors in their experience of flexible working. Where flexible arrangements are widely used, all employees are four times happier than in organisations with no flexible options. However flexible work arrangements are not driving advocacy or confidence for men, despite strong interest in their uptake.

Melanie Sanders, Bain partner and report co-author, said: "By actively encouraging flexible arrangements and ensuring they are widely used, organisations stand to gain significant employee advocacy. However, there are barriers still in the way of men accessing flexible work which suggest that they are suffering the stigmas and biases that women experienced more severely in the early days of their use of flexible working."

Meredith Hellicar, CEW spokesperson and report co-author said: "If we aspire to adapt to the workplace of the future and the increasing desires of both genders to play meaningful parenting roles, then we need strong leadership from the CEO and active support from all managers and significant role models to make flexible working a success for men and women."

Bain and CEW have identified several key actions to normalise and accelerate the success of flexible working. Organisations must:

- Actively encourage and role model the uptake of flexible work arrangements
- Ensure flexible arrangements are supported and working successfully for both genders
- Create the right culture and support employee priorities of career progression, visible support from the CEO, leadership team and colleagues, and respect of boundaries
- Create clear policies around promotion and compensation when working flexibly
- Ensure technology and an agile work environment are in place and working well

The report is the fifth in a series of landmark gender parity surveys by global management consulting firm Bain & Company and Chief Executive Women, Australia's preeminent organisation of 360–senior women leaders.

Over 1000 members of the Australian business, government and not-for-profit community responded to the survey about their use of flexible work arrangements and their perceptions of their organisations. Their responses were used to calculate a Net Promoter Score.

The full report ***The power of flexibility: A key enabler to boost gender parity and employee engagement*** can be downloaded from www.cew.org.au.

About Bain & Company

Bain & Company is the management consulting firm that the world's business leaders come to when they want results. Bain advises clients on strategy, operations, technology, organization, private equity and mergers and acquisition, developing practical insights that clients act on and transferring skills that make change stick. The firm aligns its incentives with clients by linking its fees to their results. Bain clients have outperformed the stock market 4 to 1. Founded in 1973, Bain has 53 offices in 34 countries, and its deep expertise and client roster cross every industry and economic sector. For more information visit: www.bain.com. Follow us on Twitter @BainAlerts.

About CEW

Chief Executive Women (CEW) is one of Australia's leading organisations supporting female leadership in Australia. Its members include over 360 of Australia's senior women leaders. CEW's goal is to facilitate greater representation of women at senior levels of Australian business, government and the not-for-profit sectors. CEW provides scholarship, mentoring and networking to talented women to help them attain important leadership roles in Australia and undertakes research and provides diagnostic tools to assist organisations improve the development and retention of women talent. For more information visit: www.cew.org.au, Follow us on Twitter @CEWAus