Drivers and Contexts of Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity Action in Australian Organisations

Sara Charlesworth
Philippa Hall
Belinda Probert

RMIT Publishing
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Acknowledgements

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Preface

While anti-discrimination provisions provide some limited protection for women in employment, organisational action around equal employment opportunity (EEO) has also been seen as crucial to the achievement of gender equal workplaces. The case study research reported on here sought to find out what motivates ‘best practice’ organisations to take action around EEO for women and how such organisations implement, monitor and sustain such action. The case study fieldwork, undertaken in 2002 - 2003, focused on specific initiatives undertaken by nine Australian organisations in the areas of skill attraction/retention, work/life balance and improved gender representation.

Organisations constantly change and evolve. Since the time of the original fieldwork there has been some refocusing of the initiatives studied and some changes in the organisational contexts. These changes are not reported on here. Nevertheless, recent feedback from the case study organisations supports the key findings of the study: that drivers or pressures for change can be found in all sorts of circumstances and can be mobilised for EEO purposes; that the most successful implementation approach is a continuous one where the implementation of initiatives are sustained, coordinated and renewed over the long term; and that explicitly managing for gender equitable conditions and outcomes helps make a link between EEO action and organisational effectiveness.

Sara Charlesworth
Philippa Hall
Belinda Probert
July 2005
**List of Abbreviations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARC</td>
<td>Australian Research Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief executive officer</td>
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<td>EBA</td>
<td>Enterprise bargaining agreement</td>
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<td>ECR</td>
<td>Employee choice rostering</td>
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<td>EEO</td>
<td>Equal employment opportunity</td>
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<tr>
<td>EOWA</td>
<td>Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>EOWWA</td>
<td><em>Equal Employment for Women in the Workplace Act 1999</em> (Cth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>Human resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDTT</td>
<td>National Diversity Think Tank</td>
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<tr>
<td>PML</td>
<td>Paid maternity leave</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPL</td>
<td>Paid parental leave</td>
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</table>
Summary of research findings

In Australia there are a growing number of organisations that have introduced effective change by implementing affirmative action, equal opportunity and diversity strategies. However little is known about how particular organisations achieved such change, or whether they have been able to sustain it.

This report presents the findings of a research project designed to gather evidence about what leads organisations to take action around affirmative action or equal opportunity for women, and how organisations negotiate and implement such ‘EEO/diversity action’ over time. The findings, from case studies undertaken at nine major Australian organisations, explain why these organisations took EEO/diversity action, how they went about negotiating and implementing such action and how such action was monitored and evaluated.

The project was undertaken by RMIT University and the NSW Department for Women, now the Office for Women, NSW Premier’s Department. It was jointly funded by the Australian Research Council (ARC), the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) and the National Diversity Think Tank (NDTT). The case study research was undertaken over a twenty month period between March 2002 and November 2003.

The case studies

Potential case study organisations were identified from a range of sources including the EOWA and the NDTT. Case studies in nine organisations were completed, focusing on specific EEO/actions taken within each organisation. Interviews were undertaken with a range of key personnel in each organisation including the chief executive officer (CEO), human resource (HR) and other managers, employee members of the group the EEO/diversity action was designed to benefit, as well as relevant union officials. Internal documentation relating to implementation and evaluation of the specific initiatives researched was also provided by the case study organisations.

The nine case study organisations are drawn from both the public and private sectors and a range of industries including health and community services, finance and manufacturing. The main focus of the specific EEO/diversity initiatives researched fell into the following key areas:

- skill attraction/retention
- work/family or work/life balance
- improved gender representation/culture.
The case study organisations and the specific EEO/diversity action researched included:

- **Busico**, a leading professional services firm, which had developed a senior women’s development program and introduced paid parental leave
- **Carco**, a large manufacturing company, which had increased the quantum of paid maternity leave and introduced a work/life strategy
- **Childco**, a state-based children’s health and aged care service, which had introduced employee choice rostering for nurses
- **Finco**, a major finance sector institution, which had introduced a job-share scheme and provides paid maternity leave
- **Funco**, a cultural and recreational services company, which had introduced a formal EEO action plan and paid maternity leave
- **Healthco**, a state-based acute care private teaching hospital, which had introduced employee choice rostering and paid parental leave
- **Mamuco**, an Australian-based operation of a multinational automotive parts manufacturer, which had introduced paid maternity leave and a range of flexible leave arrangements
- **Socialco**, a family welfare charitable organisation, which had introduced remuneration packaging and paid maternity and partner’s leave
- **Unico**, a tertiary institution, which had increased the quantum of paid maternity leave and introduced child-rearing leave.

**Why organisations take action**

The research revealed that concepts such as affirmative action, EEO and diversity are understood and used in very different ways within these organisations. Action taken depended on the internal and external organisational contexts, as well as the particular arguments or rationales that motivated key individuals within the organisation.

**Contexts of EEO/diversity action**

The main internal aspects of the organisational environment in which decisions are made about taking specific EEO/diversity action include:

- organisational values and culture
- senior leadership
- work and workforce organisation
- organisational change
- industrial/employee relations.

External factors identified include:

- industry/global pressures and demands
- legislative requirements
- government policy
- perceptions of social and community responsibility.

These contextual factors work together to create a forcefield in which organisations identify, develop and implement specific initiatives. While the ways in which these internal and
external factors interacted in specific case study organisations was highly individual, one of
the most important factors associated with taking and building on EEO/diversity action was
the presence of a people-focused organisational culture.

**Drivers of EEO/diversity action**
Drivers or pressures for change can be found in all sorts of circumstances and can be
mobilised for EEO purposes. In all the case study organisations there was more than one
driver identified for specific EEO/diversity action, and the ways in which these played out in
specific organisations were quite diverse. The drivers for action identified included:

- a broad ‘business case’ for attraction and/or retention
- the ‘right thing to do’
  - meeting community standards/values
  - enhancing reputation/stature of organisation
- enhancing organisational commitment/cohesion
- legislative compliance
- industrial negotiations/employee relations
  - union/employee pressure
  - containment of union influence
- personal leadership/commitment.

**Taking EEO/diversity action**

**Agreeing on action**
The internal process of negotiating and agreeing on specific EEO/diversity action varied
considerably across the organisations. Strategic use of a range of arguments in order to secure
CEO, executive or board agreement was common. The most frequently reported arguments
employed to secure agreement on action were couched in terms of the business case and it
being ‘the right thing to do’. However even where the business case was a key factor in
encouraging action, costings of the proposed initiative or the establishment of specific
performance benchmarks or targets were rare.

**Initiating action**
The specific EEO/diversity action taken in the case study organisations typically occurred
within the framework of a broader EEO/diversity strategy. This was the responsibility of the
HR or people services function within the organisation. While the integration of
EEO/diversity strategies with business strategies was seen to be important by most of the case
study organisations, a direct link was not always present.

The scope of the specific EEO/diversity action researched also varied across the case study
organisations, ranging from discrete and limited actions targeted at a specific group of
employees, to specific actions embedded in organisational policies and practices in such a
way as to provide a stepping stone to further EEO/diversity action.
Implementing action

Different approaches to the implementation of EEO/diversity action were found in the case study organisations. These ranged from the adoption of a specific initiative designed to benefit a particular group of employees, to the sustained, ongoing identification of policy changes across the organisation.

The diverse approaches taken were related to internal organisational factors such as the way in which workplaces were structured and internal workplace cultures, as well as to organisational experience with previous diversity action.

Those organisations that had taken a continuous approach to implementation were more likely to plan for, become aware of, and be able to manage the difficulties which invariably arise in the implementation of EEO/diversity action. Where possible problems and barriers to the successful implementation of specific EEO/diversity action were not anticipated, planned for, monitored and addressed, the outcomes of such action appeared more limited.

Monitoring and outcomes of action

Monitoring EEO/diversity action

Surprisingly, we found that relatively few organisations systematically assessed the impact of specific EEO/diversity action and/or broader EEO/diversity strategies. Even where broad HR indicators were used to demonstrate overall progress, there was little analysis of how a specific initiative may have contributed to developments such as decreasing turnover or reducing absenteeism.

The ‘success’ of specific EEO/diversity actions was defined in different ways. In several organisations it was the external recognition, or the contribution that an EEO/diversity initiative made to an organisation’s reputation and stature, that was cited as a major indicator of success. In other organisations success was the retention of valued staff and attraction of new staff by word of mouth.

While the importance of linking diversity management to the assessment of management performance was recognised, this rarely took place in any formal sense. In most of the organisations managers were typically assessed on meeting short-term business or financial goals, as well as on overall performance. They were rarely assessed on the ways in which they implemented specific EEO/diversity action.

Outcomes of action

Positive outcomes from specific EEO/diversity action, for both employees and for the organisations in which they work, were reported in all the case study organisations. Even where there was limited evaluation and monitoring, some tangible business benefits were identified, from decreases in absenteeism to increases in gender representation at senior levels. However the scope of these outcomes and the extent to which they contributed to a greater awareness and understanding of the value of gender equity within the organisation varied across the case studies.
Improved retention of staff, stability and organisational commitment were also frequently cited as organisational outcomes of EEO/diversity action, even where these were not measured or quantified. Improved patient/client service and meeting of production targets were also reported by a number of organisations. While improvement in the gender culture was less likely to be seen as an outcome of EEO/diversity action, increases in female representation in senior management, which had been achieved by specific EEO/diversity action, were seen as providing the environment for such cultural changes to occur.

**Further EEO/diversity action**

A number of factors appeared to lead to further EEO/diversity action within the case study organisations. Where positive feedback—both internal and external—was received about particular EEO/diversity action, organisations appeared more likely to take further action. The belief that EEO/diversity action was integral to organisational change also provided momentum for further action. Changes in the external environment such as the political and community debate around paid maternity leave also provided the impetus for a number of case study organisations to build on their initial provision of such leave.

Interestingly, while business pressures provide an important context within which EEO/diversity action is taken, our research suggests that a positive business climate is not a necessary precondition to such action. In at least two case studies, continuous improvement around EEO/diversity action was seen as a key mechanism for improving performance in the face of increasing financial pressures.

**Conclusion**

An unexpected finding from the research, given the EOWW Act with which all the case study organisations are obliged to comply, is that there was little discussion of gender equality or gender equity as a goal of EEO/diversity action in a number of case study organisations. This is in sharp contrast to European and British case study research which showed that the promotion of gender equality and the advancement of women in the workplace are explicit organisational goals of similar EEO/diversity actions.

**Linking implementation approaches and EEO/diversity outcomes**

The success of the EEO/diversity action in the nine case studies reflected different implementation approaches, ranging from the small scale and incremental to the more integrated and embedded, where the implementation of action was sustained, coordinated and renewed over the long term. In these organisations it was the presence of a *people-centred organisational culture* that appeared to be associated with ongoing and integrated EEO/diversity action.

A continuous approach to implementation appeared to depend on both the anticipation of opposition, and consistent, transparent communication across the organisation about the scope and goals of specific EEO/diversity actions. Organisations that integrated their business strategies and EEO/diversity actions and strategies were also more likely to have a continuous approach to implementation.
The extent of the outcomes of specific EEO/diversity action in the case study organisations reflects different implementation approaches. Outcomes range from the small scale, where the action taken benefited only the specific group targeted, to the achievement of tangible benefits for specific groups of employees, employees as a whole and for the organisation. It would appear that where strategies and action focus on cultural change that is inclusive of women, improvements in the perception of women and their place in the organisation follow. Similarly a commitment to ongoing cultural change and a continuous approach to the implementation of EEO/diversity action also appear to be associated with using the success of specific action as a springboard for further action.

The case study findings show that it is possible to take EEO/diversity action even without a supportive and active CEO, or extensive monitoring and measurement mechanisms being in place. While the commitment of the CEO was an important factor in several case studies, in other organisations key champions of specific projects were located at different levels of the organisation. What is needed is senior management commitment and drive—encouraging employee input and feedback—as well as ongoing monitoring and assessment that makes clear links between EEO/diversity action and organisational effectiveness.

**Beyond the business case: promoting EEO/diversity action**

The case study findings highlight the importance of not placing too much weight on the role narrow business case arguments play in driving EEO/diversity action. While the ‘business case’ for change was frequently used in the case study organisations to secure internal agreement about action, this appeared to be largely rhetorical, with little rigorous cost/benefit analysis or measurement of business outcomes undertaken.

The encouragement of organisations to take on EEO/diversity action needs to be based on an understanding of what actually drives organisational decisions, by recognising the range and interrelatedness of different drivers and contexts that may provide pressures for change. These might range from focusing on arguments about the ‘right thing to do’ in terms of meeting broader community or societal expectations, to improving organisational commitment and cohesion.

One of the advantages in acknowledging different drivers to EEO/diversity action, such as the ‘right thing to do’—either as a separate organisational/social justice case or as an integral part of a broader business case—is that this provides a means of placing gender equity squarely on the organisational agenda. This is important because where gender equity is not an explicit consideration in EEO/diversity action it is difficult for organisations to manage for gender equitable conditions and outcomes.
Chapter 1 Introduction

Research background

There are now many organisations in Australia that have introduced affirmative action, diversity and equal employment opportunity initiatives. The pressure behind these developments originally derives from the political mobilisation of women in the 1970s and 1980s, who demanded not only an end to discrimination in employment on the basis of sex, but also the introduction of measures that would require large organisations to undertake ‘actions’ designed to achieve equal employment opportunities for women.

The Affirmative Action Act 1986 (Cth), now the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999 (Cth) (EOWW Act), has been reviewed twice and found to be a worthwhile framework for improving the position of women in the workforce, although some changes have followed each review. In general terms, the Act requires covered organisations\(^1\) to take and report on actions to remove barriers and facilitate women's access to better employment opportunities. During the 1990s, the focus on equal employment opportunity (EEO) shifted to a ‘managing diversity’ approach. This approach, promoted by the EOWA (which has responsibility for the implementation of the EOWW Act) has now been adopted by many organisations, with an emphasis on the need to recruit and manage a workforce that is diverse in many ways, including sex, race, disability and ethnicity.

The approach to affirmative action and EEO taken in Australia is unique in its focus on organisational change, so while comparisons with developments in other countries have some relevance, careful examination is required of the Australian experience. An important feature of the Australian approach has been the interrelationship between a lightly regulatory approach and a management-focused change process. This approach has been strongly supported by an increasing emphasis in government policy on the ‘business case’ to promote both family-friendly workplace arrangements and EEO for women.

Despite the very considerable resources that are now allocated to support affirmative action, diversity and equal employment opportunity strategies, there has been remarkably little research into how effective such strategies have been, let alone into the reasons why particular strategies are successful or unsuccessful. There has been extensive discussion of the impact and cost of the regulatory and compliance aspects of the Act, most recently in the National Competition Policy review (Hall 1998; DWRSB 1998), but this has shed little light on broader questions of effectiveness. At the same time, a range of measures suggest that women’s employment opportunities remain highly unequal (Probert et al 2000). For example, while Australia has had a smaller gender pay gap than many other countries, progress has largely stalled. Representation of women in the highest earning positions and on government

\(^1\) Those with more than 100 employees, including private sector employers, community organisations, non-government schools, trade unions, group training schemes, and higher education institutions.
boards and committees is at a very low level and progress in increasing such representation is very slow (EOWA 2003). Australia also remains only one of two OECD countries without a national scheme of paid maternity leave.

There are a growing number of organisations in Australia that have introduced effective change through implementing affirmative action, equal opportunity and diversity initiatives. However little is known about how particular organisations achieved such change, nor about whether organisations have been able to sustain real change over time. Where evaluation of affirmative action and equal employment opportunity strategies does exist it tends to be in the form of ‘thin’ measures of projected or estimated (rarely actual) outcomes, usually presented as elements of a business case set out to establish that particular measures are likely to be cost-effective. There are also instances of fairly brief documentation about particular measures, in order to promote a particular organisation’s good practice record, often prepared in support of applications for, or in publications about, various kinds of corporate awards (for example DEWR 2002).

The drivers and contexts research project

Our research project, initially entitled Drivers and Contexts of Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity and Diversity Action in Australian Organisations, was focused on better understanding how sustained organisational change around affirmative action, equal employment opportunity and diversity is achieved.

The project was undertaken by RMIT University in collaboration with the former NSW Department for Women. It was jointly funded by the Australian Research Council (ARC) and the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) and the National Diversity Think Tank (NDTT). Ethics approval for the research was granted by RMIT University. The case study fieldwork was undertaken over a 20 month period between March 2002 and November 2003.

The project aimed to provide evidence about:

- the drivers and contexts of effective organisational change in relation to affirmative action, equal opportunity and diversity initiatives
- factors associated with successful implementation
- the range of indicators on which such initiatives have been evaluated.

Using a case study approach in a number of ‘best practice’ Australian organisations, the research sought to address the full cycle of policy and practice. It began by examining the factors which might explain why an organisation takes on a significant commitment to diversity or to equal employment opportunity for women. The research also examined the kinds of initiatives adopted and a range of implementation issues, focusing on different levels within the organisation. Finally the research addressed the evaluation of these initiatives, and the ways in which organisations think they know whether the action has been successful or not. While any gaps between policy and implementation were not a primary focus of this research, the conduct of the research was alive to the possibility that good policy does not necessarily lead to good practice.
In each case study organisation, the key issues with which the research was concerned were:

- where (with whom) and how did particular EEO/diversity initiatives originate? How did they get onto the corporate agenda? What were the decision-making processes and who was involved in them?
- on what basis were the measures/initiatives proposed, i.e. were any costings, surveys of employee need, or investigation of other organisations’ strategies undertaken?
- who supported the adoption of initiatives, and who opposed it, and how was this support and opposition mobilised?
- what was the initiative intended to achieve, and how? What has in fact been achieved?
- how does the initiative fit with and support the organisation’s business objectives and/or human resources (HR) strategy?
- what business or other benefits have been gained? Has the initiative made a difference to the situation of all or some women in this organisation? If so, how? If not, why not?

The contribution of this research lies in the in-depth study of nine organisations that have made an explicit commitment to introducing significant initiatives to improve women’s employment opportunities. It provides valuable evidence about why particular organisations take action around affirmative action, diversity and equal employment opportunities, and how they achieve and sustain change.

**The case study organisations**

The nine case studies are drawn from both public and private sectors and a range of industries from health and community services to finance and manufacturing. The basis of the selection of these organisations is set out in the research methodology outlined in Appendix 1. As our report integrates the case study findings, a brief description of each organisation and of their major characteristics is set out below. The research was conducted on the basis that the case study organisations were not to be identified by name. Generic titles are therefore used to reflect the industry in which the case studies are located.

**Busico** is a leading Australian partnership, which provides professional and accountancy services to the corporate sector. Part of a global network, *Busico* has grown rapidly in Australia over the last decade through a series of mergers. The firm has a number of offices across Australia, with women comprising almost half of the firm’s total employees. The development of leadership capabilities and opportunities for talented women is seen as crucial to attracting and retaining the talent pool *Busico* requires to meet the demands of clients.

**Carco** is a large automotive vehicle and parts manufacturing company, with its parent company located in North America. Located in two main sites, the overwhelming majority of its employees are men, with many of its production staff coming from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. *Carco* is moving from domestic manufacture to becoming a global niche player and is focused on establishing itself as a flexible and responsive organisation that can remain viable in the global market. A commitment to diversity is seen as delivering the innovation required for the company to maintain and grow its global market share.

**Childco** is a state-based children’s health and aged care service. A charitable non-profit organisation, *Childco* relies on government funding and fundraising to provide medical and other services to children from rural and regional areas. Over the last five years a move away
Drivers & Contexts of EEO/Diversity Action

from providing services for unaccompanied children has led to the restructuring of the children’s services section of Childco. Today the service operates with fewer staff and provides inpatient services, typically of one week’s duration, for children who are accompanied by their families. The changed service requirements and the relevant industry accreditation process Childco is required to undertake has led to a focus on retaining its overwhelmingly female staff, who have the specific skills to work within a unique service.

Finco is one of Australia’s leading financial institutions, with operations spread across Australia. Like many companies in the finance and insurance industry, Finco has gone through significant restructuring over the last decade. Today the company places emphasis on innovation and assisting its customers to manage their wealth. Globalisation and industry competition have led to both a focus on the ‘bottom line’ and also on attracting and retaining skilled staff. Finco has a large proportion of female staff and was one of the first institutions in the industry to introduce a range of family-friendly policies.

Funco is a rapidly growing company in the cultural and recreational services industry, with operations in two states. Privatised over a decade ago, Funco is now a publicly-listed company involved in diverse wagering and gaming operations, the former with a traditionally male customer base and the latter with an increasing female customer base. Although operating within a male-dominated industry, the majority of the company’s staff are women, employed on a casual basis. Funco’s Equal Employment Opportunity Plan is seen as one of the mechanisms to attract, develop and retain high quality employees to better meet current and future customer demand.

Healthco is a state-based acute care private teaching hospital, part of a large health services group which operates Australia-wide. Healthco, formally a public hospital, was privatised over a decade ago. After significant restructuring, Healthco is now operating with half its former staff numbers and an increased number of beds. Labour costs account for around 70 percent of Healthco’s total expenditure. At the same time, expectations from shareholders and health insurance funds for better returns and reduced costs place significant pressures on Healthco, which like other hospitals is faced with a shortage of skilled nursing staff. To meet these competing demands Healthco’s business strategy is geared to growing the business through developing and meeting the needs of its overwhelmingly female staff.

Manuco is a large automotive component parts manufacturer, with the majority of its mainly female production line staff from non-English speaking backgrounds. A subsidiary of a multinational company with a northern European head office, the safety requirements of the products Manuco assembles means the company is strongly focused on quality. To meet the challenge of delivering that quality in a fiercely competitive global market, Manuco uses a ‘people-focused’ approach to encourage productivity and commitment from its staff. The EEO/diversity action the company undertakes—uncommon in the industry in which it operates—is seen as integral to that approach.

Socialco is a family welfare charitable organisation located across two states, which provides foster care and support for families and children in crisis. Socialco is non-denominational and relies on corporate sponsorship, fundraising and both state and federal government support to maintain its 24 hour a day operations. Informed by a strong social justice philosophy, Socialco aims to meet the needs of its clients for ongoing support and advocacy, within the constraints of its budget, through attracting and retaining skilled and specialist staff, particularly over the long-term.
Chapter 1  Introduction

*Unico* is a tertiary education institution that operates across five Australian campuses. The institution operates within a competitive environment for students and staff. *Unico* staff are predominantly female and employed on either a permanent, contract or a casual basis. *Unico’s* strong social justice ethos informs its teaching practice and its HR strategy. Several of the family-friendly provisions provided at *Unico* are regarded as leading edge within the industry.

**Case study characteristics**

Most of the case studies are large organisations (more than 500 employees), with just two medium sized organisations. As set out in Table 1 below, seven of the case studies have a predominantly female workforce, one has a roughly equal representation of men and women and one has a predominantly male workforce. The proportion of women in executive and senior management varies across the case study organisations. While at least part of the workforce in most of the case studies is unionised, in only four of the case studies were the initiatives researched included in enterprise agreements with unions.

| Case studies | Industry sector | Size | Gender composition | Female % of exec & senior management | Initiative researched | In industrial award/agreement?
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<tr>
<td><em>Busico</em></td>
<td>Business services</td>
<td>Large 2,000+</td>
<td>Mixed (48%)</td>
<td>12% 25%</td>
<td>Advancement of senior women/managers Paid parental leave</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Carco</em></td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>Large 8,000+</td>
<td>Male (91%)</td>
<td>33% 10%</td>
<td>Increased paid maternity leave Work life strategy</td>
<td>x x</td>
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<td><em>Childco</em></td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Medium 250+</td>
<td>Female (78%)</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>Employee choice rostering</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Finco</em></td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Large 20,000+</td>
<td>Female (66%)</td>
<td>12% 18%</td>
<td>Job-share Paid maternity leave</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Funco</em></td>
<td>Cultural &amp; Recreation Services</td>
<td>Large 2,000+</td>
<td>Female (71%)</td>
<td>12% 17%</td>
<td>EEO action plan Paid maternity leave</td>
<td>x x</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Healthco</em></td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Large 800+</td>
<td>Female (95%)</td>
<td>69% 70%</td>
<td>Employee choice rostering Paid parental leave</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Manuco</em></td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>Large 800+</td>
<td>Female (74%)</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Paid maternity leave Flexible work &amp; leave arrangements</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Socialco</em></td>
<td>Community Services</td>
<td>Medium 350+</td>
<td>Female (79%)</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>Remuneration packaging Paid maternity leave</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Unico</em></td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Large 2,000+</td>
<td>Female (64%)</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>Paid maternity leave Child care leave</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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2 Data provided in four case studies does not disaggregate executive and senior management.
3 At the time of the fieldwork.
4 Based on ‘managers and administrators’.
5 Female representation data based on larger group of which *Healthco* forms a part
6 Data provided for permanent staff only. While more than 1500 casual staff are also employed, no gender breakdown was provided.
Specific initiatives researched in the case studies range from those broadly concerned with work/family or work/life balance and those concerned with the advancement of senior women. One case study focused on equity benchmarking of remuneration to attract workers in a low wage industry. Paid maternity leave was the major focus in two of the case studies; it was a secondary focus of the research in another six case studies.

EOWA data indicates that seven of the case study organisations had successfully applied to be waived from reporting requirements under the EOWW Act for periods of between one to three years. This means organisations have demonstrated they have addressed all equal opportunity issues relating to the relevant employment matters (noted below) and have taken ‘reasonably practical measures’ to address these issues:

At the time of the fieldwork, five organisations had been designated an ‘EOWA Employer of Choice for Women’ by the EOWA7, a designation which requires that an organisation:

- has policies in place (across employment matters) that support women across the organisation
- has effective processes (across employment matters) that are transparent
- has strategies in place that support a commitment to fully utilising and developing its people (including women)
- educates its employees (including supervisors and managers) on their rights and obligations regarding sex-based harassment
- has an inclusive organisational culture that is championed by the CEO, driven by senior executives and holds line managers accountable
- delivers improved outcomes for women and the business.

Summary data on the gender makeup of each case study organisation and the particular initiatives researched are set out in Appendix 2.

**EEO/diversity initiatives**

Each of the case study organisations are required under the EOWW Act to develop and implement an equal opportunity for women in the workplace program and, unless waived, report annually to the EOWA on the program and its effectiveness. Organisations are required to report on the following seven employment matters:

- recruitment and selection
- promotion, transfer and termination
- training and development
- work organisation
- conditions of service
- sex-based harassment
- pregnancy, potential pregnancy and breastfeeding.

The research focused on a number of specific initiatives undertaken within the case study organisations. In general terms these initiatives were those that the organisation had

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7 Since that time a sixth case study organisation has achieved that status.
nominated as priority EEO or diversity action undertaken. The main goal of the specific action researched fell into at least one of three key areas as highlighted in Table 2 below:

- skill attraction/retention
- work/family or work/life balance
- improved gender representation/culture.

### Table 2  EEO/Diversity Initiatives: Key Areas of Action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study</th>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Skill attraction/retention</th>
<th>Work/life balance</th>
<th>Gender representation/culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Busico</strong></td>
<td>Advancement of senior women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paid paternity leave</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Carco</strong></td>
<td>Paid maternity leave</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work/life strategy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Childco</strong></td>
<td>Employee choice rostering</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finco</strong></td>
<td>Job-share</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paid maternity leave</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Funco</strong></td>
<td>EEO action plan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paid maternity leave</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manuco</strong></td>
<td>Paid maternity leave</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flexible work &amp; leave arrangements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Healthco</strong></td>
<td>Employee choice rostering</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paid paternity leave</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Socialco</strong></td>
<td>Remuneration packaging</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paid maternity leave</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unico</strong></td>
<td>Paid maternity leave</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child care leave</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While these key areas represent the type of EEO or diversity action undertaken, they are artificial to some extent. Some of the initiatives studied could fall into a number of areas. For example, while paid maternity leave typically formed part of the suite of work/life policies, in some case study organisations it was specifically introduced to improve gender representation. Likewise, while employee choice rostering is often used as a retention strategy for organisations, it is also clearly a work/life balance initiative for employees.
In some instances case study organisations suggested that the introduction of paid maternity leave (PML) or paid parental leave (PPL) be a focus of the research. Given the issue of PML had currency in Australian political and policy debates at the time of the research, it was agreed we would investigate the context and drivers to the introduction of PML/PPL, where it was in place.

**Structure of the report**

Chapter 2 outlines the reasons the case study organisations took action around EEO and/or diversity. It describes the different ways in which the concepts of EEO and diversity were understood and used within the case study organisations, the internal and external contexts in which action was taken and the range of drivers identified by organisations which led them to take action.

Chapter 3 looks at how the case study organisations went about agreeing on and setting targets for EEO and/or diversity action and at the process of implementing that action. Chapter 4 presents information on the internal monitoring and evaluation of specific EEO and/or diversity action in the case study organisations. It also outlines the outcomes of such action from a number of perspectives, including management, the targets of the action taken and co-workers. We also canvas the experiences of the case study organisations in staying ‘on track’ and in taking further EEO/diversity initiatives. Finally, Chapter 5 summarises the main findings of the case study research and highlights some of their implications.
Chapter 2  Why organisations take action

A key aim of the research was to identify the drivers and contexts of effective organisational change in relation to affirmative action, equal opportunity and diversity strategies. In each case study such strategies were seen, directly or indirectly, as ultimately improving equal employment opportunities (EEO) for women. However as set out in the following section, the ways in which concepts such as affirmative action, EEO and diversity were understood and used varied considerably across, and in some cases within, the case study organisations. These different discourses reflect and shape different approaches to EEO/diversity management and provide the context within which organisations take and implement specific EEO/diversity initiatives.

The second section of this chapter looks at the contexts in which the specific EEO/diversity initiatives were developed in the case study organisations, ranging from the internal organisational context to the broader legislative, business and national policy environment. The third section describes the different types of drivers identified in the research, ranging from the ‘business case’, the ‘right thing to do’, to employee/union pressure. It also canvasses the pressure for change provided by personal leadership commitment to specific action within the case study organisations. In the final section, drawing on the experiences in three of the case studies, we illustrate the different ways in which these drivers to EEO/diversity action interact within particular organisations.

EEO and diversity discourses

I think language is pretty important in the way things get sold and sustained. HR director, Finco

[EEO] it's just a shorthand term I use, I don't care you know, whatever term you want to use for it, I never actually used ‘affirmative action’ much I must say, but I just think the jargon evolves... I don't think anything changes to be honest... Union industrial officer

The project focused on affirmative action, equal opportunity and diversity action undertaken at the individual case study organisations. Within these organisations and across Australian workplaces more generally these terms are used in many different ways and invoke a number of distinct discourses about gender equality. These discourses or ways of thinking are important because they provide an environment in which EEO/diversity action is taken. They also create a vehicle for the implementation and evaluation of such action within the organisation.
Different ideas about affirmative action, equal opportunity and diversity and the ways in which they are used in particular organisations draw on at least two main views about the ‘problem’ of equal employment opportunity for women:

- the problem is women’s individual disadvantage and individual women’s lack of access to equal employment opportunities
- the problem is structural discrimination against women and/or organisational cultures which prevent women from reaching their full potential and being fairly rewarded for the work they do.

Both perspectives underpin assumptions about the causes of unequal employment opportunities for women and appropriate organisational responses to (and responsibilities for) this. They often co-exist within organisations and may both be expressed in gender-specific or in gender-neutral ways as highlighted below.

In organisational responses to unequal employment opportunities, a ‘managing diversity’ discourse has largely replaced discourses around EEO. Broadly speaking, managing diversity is seen as more inclusive than EEO, which is often described as ‘only about women’. There appear to be two main approaches to diversity management in Australia, which are reflected in the case study organisations. These approaches reflect different understandings of the ‘problem’ outlined above: one focuses on responding to individual sources of disadvantage and the other focuses more on social justice, drawing a link between systemic problems and individual actions (Bacchi 2000; Sinclair 2000).

The two main terms used to describe specific action taken to benefit women, explicitly or implicitly, in the case study organisations were EEO and managing diversity. It is for this reason that the generic term EEO/diversity action is used throughout this publication to cover the initiatives undertaken and researched in the case studies. While many of those interviewed talked about the need to take explicit action to address barriers facing women in their organisation, none described the action they had taken as affirmative action. ‘Affirmative action’ has been an extremely contested concept in Australia. The view persists that affirmative action is about unfair advantage for women and incompatible with ‘merit’. It is thus seen as about ‘unequal’ rather than ‘equal’ employment opportunity. The ‘shadow’ of this understanding of affirmative action continues to have a powerful effect on EEO/diversity discourses, as highlighted below.

**From EEO to diversity**

Most of the case study organisations have moved from an EEO policy framework to a managing diversity framework for EEO/diversity action. At Finco for example, EEO/diversity action now sits within a diversity framework. Diversity is seen as a more inclusive concept:

*I think people see ‘EEO’ as a fairly restrictive concept and fairly much about minorities and about women, I think. They think it's a women's problem, you know, a women's issue, whereas ‘Diversity’ I think has a much better feel, a more inclusive sort of feel to it.* EEO manager Finco
In practice however, the effective focus of much diversity action has been on women:

*Diversity management comes from concern about risk management but still I would say to the extent that there's been any investment, real investment in diversity management... a lot of it has still been about family flexibilities and retaining women.* Senior industrial officer

EEO and diversity discourses take on quite specific and sometimes different meanings within organisations. At *Manuco*, EEO/diversity action sits within a broad EEO policy framework. EEO is said to be the key to recruitment, performance management, promotion and succession planning. It is described as stemming from the notion that ‘the way to provide a fair workplace is to ensure an equal workplace for everyone.’ The diversity policy within the EEO framework includes age, gender, ethnic origins, cultures and personal style as manifestations of diversity. Flexible working time and leave arrangements designed to assist with work/family balance are part of the diversity policy.

At *Carco* there are different sets of links between EEO, diversity and work/life. For example, at the policy level the work/life strategy sits within a broad diversity framework, which emphasises the links between the diverse and multicultural society in which the company operates and its own workforce. However in practice, a number of interviewees distinguished between ‘diversity’ action and more proactive action around work/life issues. Diversity is used, particularly in HR, to cover the action the company takes to meet its compliance requirements in respect of anti-discrimination and EEO legislation:

*I see it as two separate areas, I enjoy work-life because it's more positive... diversity for me is dealing with complaints you know.* EEO/diversity manager *Carco*

**Gender-neutrality**

The apparent gender-neutrality of a diversity discourse compared to the apparent gender-specificity of EEO was attractive for a number of organisations. Indeed at *Busico*, the explicit naming of an earlier incarnation of a specific EEO/diversity action as a *women’s* program was seen as counter-productive:

*I think at the time maybe the name was more provocative than it needed to be... I think that got a number of people who felt potentially threatened by that when really all the program was trying to achieve was a level playing field ... just providing the women with some support so that they could get up to that level so everyone could sort of play or compete on the same basis.* Accountant *Busico*

At *Funco* ‘diversity’ is seen to provide a practical and strategic ‘not-just-for women’ gender-neutrality to EEO/diversity action taken by the company:

*[The CEO] was very, very keen to make sure that we did open up opportunities for women in the organisation, but not only for women. What we latched on to was this diversity concept.* HR director *Funco*

‘Diversity’, I think is a good one because it's really not just about women. It is about quite a diverse workforce here and much more male than the rest of say finance, which affects our culture. I think women should be in the context of diversity... the whole issue gets a lot of flack if it's just treated as a women’s issue. HR manager *Funco*
Thus while there may be a strong consciousness of the need to improve women’s representation in non-traditional areas and in senior management, there is often a concern about how explicitly gender-specific any action should be. At Carco for example, while there is senior level support for increasing the numbers of women in senior positions, ‘merit’ is constantly balanced against any appearance of ‘special treatment’:

*You have to be very sensible and you have to be very balanced in what you do. Ultimately when push comes to shove, we’re not going by quotas, we’re going by performance, and from a board point of view and the leadership team here, it is always performance which comes first, and by setting these tremendous examples of having very respected women on the board, there's just no argument any more. But we are not working on quotas... I mean we measure it of course - how many executives we have and we don't have - but it's performance that makes the final decision... and I will not accept any more that we select out of a male-only pool.* CEO Carco

While the company has been effective in increasing the representation of women in executive management, this has not been articulated as an explicit goal. The gender-neutrality of EEO/diversity action is seen as an important tactic to avoid any backlash. This is also the case in other areas with poor female representation. For example, there is an explicit rejection of actively recruiting female engineers by offering scholarships or by other means as taken up by Carco’s competitors, and indeed by other companies in the industry such as Manuco. Such action is seen as overtly privileging women in a way which has the potential to encourage a backlash.

EEO/diversity discourses may be influenced by the gender mix of an organisation and its senior management. In female-dominated workplaces an explicit focus on women and their particular needs may not be seen as necessary. For example, at Healthco paid *parental* leave rather than paid *maternity* leave was introduced so that it was seen as inclusive of men in a female-dominated organisation. On the other hand at Manuco, where specific EEO/diversity action is couched in gender-neutral terms, internal documentation openly acknowledges that most of the production-line workers are women from non-English speaking backgrounds with primary responsibility for family care. Company policies and internal publications refer to recognising ‘the special needs of women’ and the company doing its ‘best to cater for women and provide them with opportunities otherwise often unavailable’:

*It’s not just about celebrating difference; we’ve got to ensure that differences don’t exclude people. If you have a competency based organisation, then you pick the best person for the position, and I guess that at this stage of development, you have to be willing to make sure that women are represented, to do more to get them out there.* HR director Manuco

As will be highlighted in Chapter 3, the presentation and implementation of EEO/diversity action as focused on women or as more gender-neutral is a constant tension within a number of case study organisations and provides an important context in which specific EEO/diversity action is taken.

**Work/life & work/family**

In a number of case studies the specific EEO/diversity initiative researched taken was described as action taken to support employees’ work/life or work/family balance. Depending on the organisation, ‘work/life’ or ‘work/family’ initiatives or action were seen as either part of an EEO or a managing diversity strategy.
Work/life in particular is seen as offering recognition of specific issues many women may face in the workplace and also as projecting an inclusivity not only of men, but also of extra-family activity:

..... [its] about sport, art, community development or even personal time out, rather than just child care. CEO Busico

On the other hand, Socialco, with its explicit commitment to supporting families as clients, uses the term ‘work/family’ to describe EEO/diversity action to improve flexible work and leave arrangements for staff.

Work/life action is typically presented in most in-house material in a gender-neutral way; such as, ‘work-life recognises we employ the whole person’. At the same time there is an implicit understanding that because women are disadvantaged in the workplace because of their work/family responsibilities, work/life action has a different importance for men and women in the workplace:

I'm not really sure yet if it's going to the stage where the male in this environment will not take a job with [Carco] if he was given the right job because he doesn't have a certain work-life benefit that would help his family... [For men] if they get it, it's gravy... it's a benefit but it's not something that's going to make a decision whether or not they take the job. Sales executive Carco

The Contexts of EEO/diversity action

The specific drivers of the particular EEO/diversity action in each case study organisation are documented in the next section. What drives or motivates organisations to take action at a particular time or in a particular way and what sustains that action over time is influenced by a number of factors, both internal and external to that organisation, as well as the dominant EEO/diversity discourses discussed above.

In this section, we outline the types of factors which constitute the broader environment within which strategic decisions were made about taking particular EEO/diversity action, and within which such action was implemented within the case studies.

The internal context

Internal factors identified in both case study interviews and public and in-house documentation include the following.

Organisational values and culture

The culture and values of an organisation influence the type and the extent of EEO/diversity action taken. At the time of the research some companies such as Carco and Funco were just beginning to articulate and develop a set of corporate values. Other case studies had a clearly articulated and established set of organisational values, which provided a framework within
which to take specific action around EEO/diversity. At Healthco for example, the core company values, set out in internal and external documentation, are:

- respect for the individual
- pursuit of excellence
- teamwork
- contribution to the community
- the Healthco spirit.

These core values have been in place for almost a decade and are invoked in all aspects of Healthco’s operation:

*We developed these core values that we still use today, and we recruit by them, we performance manage by them, we do everything by them, and they're not just a few words on the wall... they're actually utilised all the time, referred to all the time, and staff know about them all the time... So they're embedded into the organisation and what we did here was we created these core values and we started to expose them and publicise them within [Healthco], and staff really grasp them. You know, they're fairly simple, they're fairly basic, but they actually capture what we're about.* Healthco CEO

Companies with an established set of organisational values included those that did not explicitly identify EEO or diversity as a company value, such as Healthco, and those that did, such as Manuco, whose head office sets out the promotion of EEO in its code of business ethics. At Busico, while EEO/diversity were not explicitly part of the set of corporate values, specific EEO/diversity action was seen and internally marketed by the CEO and senior managers as fitting within specific company values that focus on the attraction and retention of talent.

Several case study organisations explicitly identified themselves as ‘people-centred’. In some instances these values were articulated through a ‘family’ or ‘teamwork’ motif. For example, in much of Healthco’s internal and external documentation and in staff interviews, the ‘Healthco way’ or ‘Healthco spirit’ was frequently invoked. At Manuco, all staff from the CEO down wear the same dust jacket at work, with senior management referring to the way this breaks down any ‘us’ and ‘them’ between management and the shop floor:

*Like this jacket that we're wearing, the person who sweeps the floor wears this, I wear this, and [the CEO] wears it. So we try to break down those barriers. Gone are the days when you had to come to work in a tie and a suit and all that, so that's good, and I think it's really good because then people don't see you as something different to them.* Quality engineer Manuco

At Childco, a relatively small organisation without a formal set of organisational values, teamwork and the ‘family-like’ atmosphere was invoked in almost every interview:

*The culture here is one of a fairly close-knit team... Very low turnover, and people tend to socialise quite a lot outside the organisation, so a lot of the people that work here are also workmates but friends outside, and that's something that has developed from their employment here.* Childco CEO
The organisational culture of two of the case studies was explicitly informed by strong social justice values. At *Unico* for example, a commitment to the importance of the dignity of all human beings, ‘community’ and social justice was fundamental to the ‘humane’ approach adopted by the organisation both to its role as an educational institution and as an employer. The introduction of paid maternity leave and child-rearing leave, the focus of the current research in this organisation, was seen as a natural expression of this approach.

*Socialco* works with children and families in crisis. The nature of this work...

...leads us to have a structural view of problems in the society in which we see child abuse and neglect as connected with poverty and social exclusion, and therefore if you like, we approach things from a social justice point of view. It just makes sense because of who we work with. CEO *Socialco*

The kind of work undertaken at *Socialco* also provides a direct link with issues of gender equality:

[it's] terribly important to us, the issue of valuing women as carers and even the issues to do with our clients, which are issues about the criminalisation of poverty, so women's issues are really terribly central to our thinking in the programs and all of that. Senior manager, *Socialco*

The broader gender culture of the case study organisations influenced and was influenced by the EEO/diversity discourses discussed above as well as the explicit commitment of senior management to EEO/diversity. The gender culture was also influenced by the gender mix of the organisation and the representation of women both vertically and horizontally, as discussed below.

**Senior leadership**

What was striking in at least three of the case studies was the fresh perspective brought by new CEOs and senior managers, including those who had come from outside Australia. At *Carco*, the CEO described his impression when he first arrived of where women were located within the company:

... all I saw here was a workforce of highly educated females, they were totally under-utilised, and the market had changed dramatically where women were much more the driving force, and in particular, our company wasn't even structured to understand that.

At *Funco* the new HR director described his first impression of the organisation:

One of the things that hit me right between the eyes, it was a very male-dominated organisation, and it wasn't too long as we went down the process of building a blueprint of what the organisation would look like in the future, that [we saw] it really required a total change in mindset to open up areas of opportunity for women. HR director *Funco*

Senior leadership can also be critical in driving EEO/diversity action, as will be discussed below. Equally, the loss of a senior ‘champion’ can affect organisational commitment to a particular EEO/diversity action more generally. For example at *Busico*, when the CEO who had supported the first incarnation of the senior women’s program left, the momentum behind the initiative waxed and waned until the program was restructured to fit in with the new CEO’s emphasis on a specific set of corporate values.
Work and workforce organisation

The organisation and management structure, the work undertaken by particular organisations and the way in which work is organised within the organisation all influence the EEO/diversity action an organisation might take.

While some case studies existed as autonomous enterprises, several were part of national or multi-national companies. Three had overseas parent companies, which can provide both leverage and pressure in respect to specific EEO/diversity action.

The way case study organisations are structured was also important. For example Busico is established as a partnership structure. This shapes the way EEO/diversity issues may be identified:

...from a partnership perspective, things change. You know there is this constant change of thinking and approach... Female partner Busico

and also the way support for such initiatives is negotiated internally:

I think one of the things is in a partnership, in a way every partner is a shareholder as well, so they work in the business and they're owners of the business at the same time, and there's a certain sense of collegiality in that. Well we've got as corporatised a structure as we can have, but basically we are a partnership and we are very proud of our collegiality. So it does mean that you need to get a general body of partners behind you on these things otherwise it's not going to happen. CEO Busico

In a partnership structure the support of the CEO for action is important but not sufficient:

[decisions have to] get signed off by the CEO... It is less structured and less formal than you think... We are a more organic organisation so any one part of the organisation, if some one in Adelaide came up with a great idea and talked to the CEO about it, it can happen... However it needs the support also of other partners... that’s part of the downside of being organic. There are upsides and there are downsides and so what is really important in this, is programs either die or they thrive here, in my view based on the ability of people to persuade other people around its importance. And so that is why the CEO talking about it is very important. HR director Busico

The nature of the work undertaken varied significantly across the case studies as evidenced by the industries in which they are located (see Table 1). The core work included manufacturing at Carco and Manuco, direct patient care at Healthco, client support—either ongoing as at Socialco or episodic as at Childco—the provision of education at Unico, financial services at Finco, business services at Busico and entertainment services at Funco. For Manuco, the nature of the work provides a rationale for the development of a people-centred organisational culture:

Our manufacturing processes are by their nature not particularly sophisticated, they're low cost people-sensitive processes... It means that the quality of the product is very much dependent on the skills and the attitude of the people that are actually producing the parts [so] we have a high reliance on our people. CEO Manuco
The nature of the core work undertaken in some case studies brought its own demands, and influenced the EEO/diversity actions pursued. For example, the need for out of hours work and long job tenure to ensure continuity of care for the families who are the clients of Socialco has led the organisation to look at ways to support its case workers to ensure consistency of staff in working with families in crisis.

The physical organisation of work was also important and in several instances affected the organisational reach of the EEO/diversity action taken. For example Carco’s corporate and white-collar workforce is predominantly located in one state with much of its production line workforce in another. In companies with a national reach, such as Finco and Busico, even where a specific EEO/diversity action was an organisation-wide initiative, its implementation tended to differ across business units and state offices. In organisations located on the one work site, such as Manuco and Healthco, EEO/diversity action tended to be more evenly spread across the organisation.

Work organisation can be a key influence on both the type of initiatives taken and also the extent of their implementation. For example, at Funco it was the smaller permanent workforce (a third of which was female) that was the focus of both the initiatives undertaken and their implementation, rather than the larger casual workforce, more than four fifths of which was female. Work organisation also played a role at Carco, where the implementation of the work/life strategy has been initially restricted to the white collar workforce.

The gender mix of each organisation and where women were located in it might also be expected to have an influence on specific EEO/diversity action taken. For example, in organisations with male-dominated workforces such as Carco or with work areas/business units that were male-dominated, such at Busico and Funco, there was concern that EEO/diversity initiatives not be couched as initiatives designed primarily to benefit ‘just women’.

Organisational change
Organisational change can also provide an opportunity to consider EEO/diversity action. For example at Childco, the restructuring of the service led to a recognition of the importance of retaining experienced staff who could deliver a more specialised service. Three of the case study organisations had been privatised in the last decade. The resultant restructuring was seen by incoming senior management to provide new opportunities to address male-dominated organisational structures and EEO/diversity issues more broadly.

Organisations which are expanding or contracting can also affect the implementation and spread of particular EEO/diversity initiatives. For example, at Finco, where the workforce has been downsizing for some time, the numbers of staff involved in the Job-Share program have remained static for several years, although the proportion of supervisory staff who now job-share has slowly grown. In contrast at Manuco and Healthco where employment numbers are growing, there has been a steady increase both in the range and reach of EEO/diversity initiatives implemented. As we discuss in Chapter 4, this is not to suggest that there is necessarily a causal link between organisational growth and EEO/diversity action, or that effective EEO/diversity action is only possible in a growing business. Indeed Manuco senior management argue it is through undertaking a range of EEO/diversity action that the company can meet its production and quality targets and grow.
Drivers & Contexts of EEO/Diversity Action

Industrial/employee relations
The employee relations philosophy and culture of an organisation is a key influence and facilitator of EEO/diversity action. Organisations with a people-centred culture tend to place an emphasis on trust and regular communication with, and encouragement of feedback from, employees across the organisation. For example at Manuco, emphasis is placed on a consensus-based industrial relations paradigm. The main elements of this paradigm are:

• a culture of respect, transparency and an aim to be an employer of choice
• a non-aggressive, flat structure that promotes open communication
• the presence of a range of consultative mechanisms, and the provision of opportunities for employees to provide input to company decision-making
• the provision of benefits that are creative and reflect the needs of the workforce.

Both more broadly and within organisations, union influence provides an important context in which EEO/diversity action may be taken. Within organisations unions may provide a vehicle for raising or opposing specific initiatives.

In seven of the case study organisations there was at least some union presence, in that there were specific groups of employees who were union members. At Manuco and Carco for example, most shop floor employees were members of the relevant unions. However at Funco union membership tended to be limited to casual staff.

In four case studies, the particular initiative researched was set out in the relevant enterprise agreement. However in three cases this did not arise out of union demands for particular EEO/diversity action, but was driven by management initiative. In these organisations, as discussed below, the desire to contain union influence provided a driver for the particular EEO/diversity action taken.

At Socialco the remuneration packaging and paid maternity leave was set out in a non-union agreement, because union membership was low and because it was considered by management that the relevant union would not agree to salary packaging. At Finco industrial negotiations over a decade ago provided not only the vehicle but a driver for the introduction of job-share arrangements, as discussed in the final section of this chapter. However (apart from Finco) even where there was a significant union presence in case study organisations, the relevant union played little role in the ongoing implementation or monitoring of the particular EEO/diversity action researched.

The external context

Industry global pressures/demands
Individual case study organisations had their own specific external business pressures and demands. As will be discussed in the following section, such pressures and demands may act as direct drivers to EEO/equality action. Business pressures and demands also create the context in which EEO/diversity action may take place and indeed can work to facilitate or frustrate particular action. For example the industry in which Manuco operates is subject to annual price reductions rather than price increases. According to the CEO, this has led the company to invest in increasing the technical competency of its staff, particularly among the predominantly female shop floor employees who now have access to in-house training that provides accreditation and access to a career path.
Business pressures and demands can also influence the implementation of EEO/diversity action. The influence of the bottom line is important. For example at Finco:

*Globalisation and competition have certainly meant that people are a lot more focused on the bottom line.* HR general manager Finco

The resulting intense industry competition has meant that:

*Managers in the branches have a lot of targets to meet and sales performance issues and those sorts of things, and I think they're finding it pretty tough...* EEO manager Finco

Such targets and performance requirements can of course act as constraints on, or provide opportunities for, EEO/diversity action as described above at Manuco.

The increasing competitiveness of the business environment, as well as the opportunity to influence industry policy, has led senior management in a number of case study organisations to play a broader industry or business leadership role. This can place some pressure on such companies to be seen to ‘walk the talk’ and ensure their EEO/diversity initiatives are regarded as ‘best practice’, both within their respective industries and the wider business community.

**Legislative requirements**

In Australia anti-discrimination provisions are set out both in federal and State industrial relations and anti-discrimination legislation. At the organisational level, the requirement for legislative compliance and the risk management processes this generates internally act as a background influence on EEO/diversity action. Legislative compliance may be a driver to action and legislative compliance requirements as discussed in Chapter 3 may also be used internally to ‘sell’ the rationale of a particular EEO/diversity initiative.

In addition, legislative requirements require non-government organisations with 100 or more employees to develop an EEO program for women and report annually to EOWA on the program and its effectiveness. These requirements provide the immediate environment in which much of the EEO/diversity action reported on here is initiated and implemented. The process of compiling the EOWA annual report can highlight particular issues for organisations and can prove fruitful in meeting industry standards more generally. For example at Childco:

*It was good because we also used a lot of that information [in] what we've done for our accreditation as well, so it flowed over to meeting some of the criteria under that human resource standard as well... most of the headings that came with the EOWA reporting would also come up through the accreditation standards as well.* Director of Nursing Childco

Indeed, in one of the case studies, Funco, the development of the action plan required under the EOWA and the process of reporting formed the rationale and structure of the organisation’s overall EEO action plan, as well as encouragement to take further action:

*I think it [the EEO Action Plan] is probably the by-product of the [EOWW] legislation, of the regulation because you say to yourself, ‘Hang on a minute, this is something that means a lot to us as far as measuring our performance, as far as keeping at the top of our game, and each year looking for something more that we have to deliver.* HR director Funco
**Government policy**

Changes in government policy can also help create an environment in which specific EEO/diversity initiatives may be pursued. For example at *Socialco*, a recent fringe benefit tax ruling by the Australian Tax Office allowing employees of registered charities to salary sacrifice their wages created an opportunity for the remuneration packaging that is the focus of the current research.

Consistent with its light touch regulatory approach, federal government policy has focused on encouraging the voluntary initiatives of employers both in taking EEO/diversity action and in providing support for work/family balance. This encouragement relies heavily on information provision and on supporting ‘best practice’ awards. The promotion of EOWA awards, work/family awards and employer of choice awards provide an important context in which EEO/diversity action is taken. The benefits of the public recognition which follows such awards are highlighted in Chapter 4. Such public recognition is also enhanced by the role the EOWA takes in waiving organisations which are seen as being proactive around EEO/diversity from having to report under the EOWW Act as outlined in Chapter 1. Lists of waived organisations are available on the EOWA website and a number of the case study organisations use their waived status in external promotion and publicity. None of those interviewed in the case study organisations reported undertaking specific EEO/diversity action in order to achieve this waived status. However, this status was seen as a positive by-product of such action and played an important role in the profile of such organisations as ‘good corporate citizens’.

Specific industry policy also provides a context in which EEO/diversity action may be initiated. For example, what are known as the ‘Kemp criteria’ in the federal Government’s higher education industrial relations policy provided an important environment in which *Unico* made a decision to increase paid maternity leave. The ‘Kemp criteria’ provide that universities can access supplementary funding of up to two percent of their salary budgets contingent on the achievement of specific workplace reforms reflecting Government policy. There are 14 criteria of which universities must meet nine. In the case of *Unico*, including the provision for one year’s paid maternity leave in an enterprise agreement helped demonstrate one of these criteria, which requires that that the agreement be specifically tailored to the university, rather than reflecting any pattern bargaining across universities.

**Social/community responsibility**

The corporate values of a number of case study organisations, for example *Manuco* and *Healthco*, were explicitly linked in those organisations to a broader social or community responsibility. As will be discussed below, this broader sense of corporate responsibility *beyond* the organisation influenced the extent to which the ‘right thing to do’ provided a major impetus to, or driver for, specific EEO/diversity action.

The recent community and political debates around paid maternity leave (PML)—and work and family provisions more generally—provided an important environment in which a number of organisations decided to take specific action to implement or to extend PML or paid parental leave (PPL). Even where it was not an explicit driver, the idea that in the twenty-first century a modern organisation should reflect community standards and/or meet community expectations provided the context for the introduction/extension of PML/PPL in a number of organisations.
The range of internal and external influences described above comprise the many different factors which can constitute the context in which individual case study organisations took specific EEO/diversity action. To some extent it is artificial to separate these factors out as they can work together to create a broad environment or a ‘force field’ in which organisations identify, develop and implement specific initiatives.

The case studies suggest that there are certain factors in the internal environment that will predispose an organisation to take specific EEO/diversity action or provide a context in which such action is taken. The organisational culture—including its focus on ‘people’ more broadly and internal EEO/diversity discourses in particular—is very important in influencing the sustainability of organisational change around EEO/diversity, as are perceptions about external pressures and demands. The ways in which the external and internal factors interact within particular organisations is of course highly individual. In practice, organisations operate in the context of a dynamic interplay of enabling and inhibiting contexts in relation to, and indeed discourses around, EEO/diversity.

**Drivers of EEO/diversity action**

In recent years, much focus has been on what is known as the ‘business case’ for adopting EEO/diversity action. That is, on showing how the adoption of EEO/diversity action (such as PML) can leave organisations financially better off. The development and promotion of the business rationale for EEO/diversity action is embedded in the EOWW Act and promoted by the EOWA. However to date there has been little examination of the extent to which the business case rationale drives EEO/diversity action in organisations in practice. As part of this study, interviewees in case study organisations were asked about the main drivers to specific EEO/diversity action taken by the case study organisations, we have concentrated on the views of those involved in or very close to the decision-making process which led to the specific EEO/diversity action taken.

Drivers to EEO/diversity action that operate within an organisation may be different to those that are invoked in the public arena, where the criteria for ‘best practice’ awards may place emphasis on the ‘business case’ driver. Indeed as we note in Chapter 3 the ‘business case’ may operate as a post facto legitimiser, after EEO/diversity action is taken. Within organisations, additional and/or different drivers to action may be perceived at different levels and areas within the organisation. In highlighting the main drivers identified to specific EEO/diversity action taken by the case study organisations, we have concentrated on the views of those involved in or very close to the decision-making process which led to the specific EEO/diversity action taken.

**A business case for attraction/retention**

While most of those interviewed in the case study organisations argued that there were sound business reasons for undertaking EEO/diversity action, few pointed to any financially quantifiable cost benefits as a driver for action. The most frequent use of the business case driver was where retention and attraction of employees generally and/or in key (mainly female) occupations were seen as a problem, as illustrated below.
At Childco, one of the main rationales for introducing employee choice rostering for registered nurses was the desire to retain existing staff, who were experienced in delivering the services provided by the organisation to children and families:

I think with our Director of Nursing she was happy with the staff that were employed here, and I think it was a general decision to go on to this self rostering because I think she wanted to keep her staff, and people that knew the place had worked with children and [were] very familiar [with it], because it's quite a unique organisation. Registered nurse Childco

At Healthco, a primary driver to introducing employee choice rostering was the need to attract and retain nursing staff. This business case rationale was supported by an analysis of workforce data. Overall labour costs account for 70 percent of total expenditure and it is argued it makes good ‘business sense’ to nurture this resource and explore ways to meet the needs of staff:

Analysis of our workforce data show that the majority of our staff are in the childrearing stage of life and therefore would have a strong requirement to work in an organisation that recognised the requirements placed on them during this critical and important stage of their life. Also the market that is the target in terms of our recruitment and selection, and specifically for nursing staff, is also predominantly in the childrearing age-group and we needed to have work arrangements that could accommodate the needs of both parties. CEO Healthco

At Socialco a key driver to examining the option of remuneration packaging was the need to retain workers with the ‘right values’ over the long term:

I mean our only product is really the nature of the relationship between the worker and the client, and the nature of how they perceive what social problems a client is facing... it's so values driven... There were some very pragmatic reasons that drove the [remuneration packaging] and that, we weren't keeping staff, and so it's also terribly important for us as an organisation to have a stable staff because it's one of the hallmarks of child welfare ... [that] new child welfare workers stay on average [only] eight months... So terribly important to our work, particularly with long-term kids, is that their workers are stable. Senior manager Socialco

A related pressure was the need to recruit ‘quality’ middle managers in a highly competitive but low wage industry:

The most compelling evidence to the [staff advisory group] and to myself was that we have had several instances where we had been in serious difficulties recruiting middle managers. Because we pay above award, ordinary case workers were OK... they were good but I think there was only 800 dollars between you know, getting to the top of that grade and being a manager, and managers carry the shit in the agency... they really do. They carry all the really revolting case decisions, you know, whether this child is safe or not, they have to cover at night, they have to carry beepers, you know... Anyway, we were looking for two new managers in one centre, and this is why it became so pointed, it rarely happens, and they advertised and they advertised and they advertised... they finally got somebody they really liked in one of the jobs, who started and finished within two weeks because another job that she had put in for in [a government department] paid much more. And so with much sadness she left us because she thought she would really enjoy the job, but she didn't have a choice,
and people were going out and saying you know, ‘This is what's happening to us now, we can’t attract quality staff’ and they were right. CEO Socialco

A broadly conceived business case centred on the business benefits of looking after the company’s employees in a competitive environment was used at Manuco as one of the rationales for the introduction of flexible work arrangements and PML:

There's a competition out there and globally. So we had to find a way of being able to embrace continuous improvement, in other words year on year cost reductions in a way that wouldn't alienate our people. So the value in [looking after] our people is that we want to have people that understood and were not fearful of the fact that we could embrace continuous improvement, and that's often a problem when it comes to industrial relations that people say, ‘If I get better then you'll need less people, my job's at risk’. We didn't want to do that. So we wanted people to understand and to have trust in the fact that we could embrace continuous improvement but guarantee that they would have security of employment at the same time. CEO Manuco

The ‘right thing to do’

In many of the case study organisations it appeared there was also a broad social justice case for EEO/diversity action. This was frequently described by interviewees as ‘the right thing to do’. The right thing to do covered two different but often linked rationales:

- a ‘social justice case’: responding to perceived community standards/expectations, such as in respect to gender representation, paid maternity leave or meeting the needs of employees/clients
- a ‘corporate citizenship case’: enhancing the reputation/stature of the organisation

Responding to what are seen as community standards and expectations was seen as a significant driver to EEO/diversity action in a number of case study organisations. At Manuco responding to perceived community values provides an important driver to EEO/diversity action:

We listen to our people but we’ve also listened to the community values and what society is saying to us about the sort of workplace that our broader community wants to see. CEO Manuco

At Socialco, a broad social justice commitment to supporting families, particularly mothers, was a significant driver to the decision to introduce paid maternity leave:

Women's issues are really terribly central to our thinking in the programs and all of that... by valuing women as carers then draws you in then to look at women who are in paid work, [and] supporting women carers. Senior manager Socialco

At Unico, the organisation's emphasis on a humane approach to the employment relationship—together with its social values, centred on the value of the family—provided an important driver to decisions to increase the quantum of paid maternity leave and to introduce child-rearing leave:
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It has grown out of our culture and our mission. The mission at [Unico] is quite complex. It links into our tradition, but it has a specific focus in one area that is quite significant in HR. And that is about the dignity of the human being or the human person. From my point of view as an HR director much of what we attempt to do naturally hangs off that concept. That really is important to us and we do endeavour to live up to it. It is the aspiration I think that governs [Unico]. HR director Unico

At Funco responding to changing community and customer expectations about gender representation was an important rationale for the development of women managers in the company, which was linked to the business case:

I think it matters to the customer if you're reflecting your customer base in your workforce then at board level and at senior exec level if you're not mirroring what's in the society on ideas, creativity, you lose out on customers. I think it makes good business sense... you're never going to get anywhere with any of these issues unless it makes good business sense. HR director Funco

Enhancing the reputation and stature of the organisation was a key driver in the decision at Healthco to introduce employee choice rostering and was closely linked to becoming an employer of choice:

To attract staff we want it recognised that Healthco is accommodating and the [employee choice rostering] is another strategy in that. CEO Healthco

At Healthco a decision to introduce PPL was also seen as the right thing to do because it recognised the practical reality of having a baby and importantly allowed management to take the initiative:

From an employer's point of view, we felt it was the right thing to do for the organisation because we thought it was a good way to reward people and to recognise the high cost of having a baby, the reality of people having to take time out to have a baby. Well then, why not as an employer take the initiative of introducing it rather than wait to be told to introduce it, and have it linked to a bargaining position rather than a business decision. HR director Healthco

At Funco, enhancing the reputation of the company by taking specific EEO/diversity action, which would lead to a better representation of women in management, was seen as a way of counteracting the negative reputation the company might attract because of its involvement in the gambling industry:

For a company like [Funco] becoming an Employer of Choice for women [is] really important in order to mitigate the negative publicity around problem gambling that often makes people see [Funco] as not a particularly ‘good’ organisation. Senior manager Funco

Organisational commitment/cohesion

An important reason a number of case study organisations reported that they took specific EEO/diversity action was to enhance organisational commitment and cohesion. For Unico, the desire to restore employee morale and commitment after what was described as ‘a bruising encounter’ between management and employees in a prior enterprise bargaining

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round provided a major impetus to the decision to increase the quantum of PML and strengthen arrangements for child rearing leave:

*And everybody [had] got a bit muscular. Unions, staff and university management and we didn’t feel that it did our culture and our community a lot of good... So we thought [this round] we would ask staff and I put a proposal that we have some sort of process of attempting to obtain insight directly from staff... Now [the feedback] wasn’t as detailed as we want [more] maternity leave, but it was we want issues [taken up in the EBA] that will help us with our families and help us in our family lives.* HR director *Unico*

For *Manuco* the desire to ensure continued employee trust and commitment was also an important driver in the decision to introduce a package of family-friendly entitlements, including PML:

*Why you would introduce PML and other flexibilities? You're keeping your skills here... and you're also encouraging commitment to the organisation ... look at the morale boost for other people in the organisation as well... if [Manuco] can be so good with people who are having babies, tomorrow if I was to get sick or if I was to be injured, I'm sure they would do the same thing for me. That, I think, is what people would think.* Quality engineer *Manuco*

**Legislative compliance**

Complying with legislative requirements, particularly in respect to more recent EEO/diversity initiatives, was less commonly reported as an explicit rationale for EEO/diversity action. To a large extent this reflects the wider industrial and policy context, in which a ‘light’ touch regulatory focus is favoured and emphasis is placed on the promotion of ‘best practice’.

The broad anti-discrimination framework and the requirement to report to the EOWA was part of the context in which EEO/diversity action was taken in all the case study organisations. However at *Funco*, these legislative requirements were cited as one of the main drivers to, and indeed a framework for, the EEO/diversity action around the management training and flexible work initiatives introduced as part of the EEO Action Plan:

*I think on a basic level it comes back to legislative compliance across EEO and, anti-discrimination laws... so it's ensuring that compliance and protecting the organisation, and individuals within the organisation around that... In terms of moving women through a historically very male dominated business and industry, and looking at the benefits to the business in having more women distributed throughout the business and through to senior management, [the legislation] highlighted the opportunities that this could offer in following through with the report and the action plan to realise those goals of greater representation.* HR manager *Funco*

**Industrial negotiations/employee pressure**

Industrial negotiations, specifically enterprise bargaining, were a driver to the introduction of the job-share scheme at *Finco*. Enterprise bargaining also provided a mechanism for the introduction of specific EEO/diversity action in a number of case studies. Apart from *Finco* as outlined below, union claims or union pressure did not act as a direct driver to the specific
EEO/diversity action researched. However the desire of management to contain union influence through specific EEO/diversity action at a certain point in time was a more important driver to action in a number of organisations, particularly where there was significant union membership.

At Manuco, management taking the initiative around EEO/diversity action and more generally is seen to allow the company to better meet the needs of employees:

*Whilst we don't exclude [the union], we make it very clear that our interest here is in progressing the wellbeing of our employees and not in meeting the political needs or the industry needs as such. So we've tried to have a focus on making sure not so much that we're ahead of the game, although I think we probably are, but making sure that the sorts of benefits that we're able to pass on to our employees are those that are important to them. It's very much a case of trying to listen to what they're asking, seeing where their problems are and making sure that the things that we put into our EBAs and the things that we put into our work practices and policies are the things that are important to the people that we have in our organisation.*

CEO Manuco

The role of management rather than union initiative in driving the decision to introduce PML is acknowledged by the main union at Manuco:

*Probably in our industry it's one of the first [to get] paid maternity leave. It is one of the first issues dropped off the agenda in, for example, EBA negotiations where always your first issue is money, and then a range of conditions and paid maternity leave might be at different times part of that, but it [was] dropped off the agenda, because [there's] only eight per cent of women in the industry. I think as an industry-wide claim, it's likely to drop off the agenda, but will be probably appropriate in places like [Manuco].* Union organiser Manuco

At Unico, the decision to increase the quantum of PML and introduce child rearing leave, both well above prevailing industry standards, was as noted above at least partly driven by a desire to respond directly to employee feedback through a management ‘listening program’ rather than to union claims in the enterprise bargaining process:

*In terms of we would call ‘family-friendly’ there were a whole range of suggestions made... Probably the strongest one and the most eloquent one was basically it’s not just money, we want to feel that we are cared for and we want to feel that [Unico] will support us in various ways that will improve the quality of our lives.*

HR director Unico

The decision by management to significantly increase the quantum of PML caught the union by surprise:

*I sort of jaw dropped when we saw it because there's no question about the fact that it was a very generous initiative. We couldn't quibble with that, and you know, we weren't going to turn around and say, ‘No, no, no, we're not going to accept it’. Union organiser Unico*

The introduction of PML and some other flexible work arrangements at Funco was driven to some extent by pressure from senior managers when other senior women managers went on leave:
...what had happened in the organisation [was] there's a lot of women who were pivotal in various areas [who] were going on mat leave, and all of a sudden the managers initially started to jump up and down and say, almost like ‘This is your problem. Now you see what a problem this is, don't you? Don't you see what a problem this is?’ It hadn't arisen before because the women hadn't been in those positions, but now all of a sudden they were going on mat leave, and then there was this subtle change from it is somehow ‘my fault’ to ‘Well, how are we going to deal with it because we want them to come back’, and then all of a sudden it got a little bit of a life of its own...Senior manager Funco

In a number of the case study organisations, increased representation of women in senior management was also reported to increase the pressure for change around EEO/diversity more generally.

Personal leadership/commitment

The personal leadership and commitment of senior managers was an important driver to EEO/diversity action in all of the case studies, who frequently drew on their previous work and personal experiences in putting forward specific EEO/diversity action. In most cases this action was initiated by female senior managers. The support of CEOs for EEO/diversity action and more specifically for the relevant manager initiating the action was also important in a number of case studies. However as highlighted above, the personal leadership/commitment of union officials and organisers played little role in driving decisions to take the specific EEO/diversity action researched in the case study organisations.

At Manuco, the idea to introduce PML came initially from the HR director. In her previous job she had been responsible for the introduction of PML in a local government authority and prior to that worked as a teacher, where she had been able to access PML for the birth of her own children:

I pushed it. That would be the one thing that I'd say [is] that wouldn't have happened if I hadn't been here. Because even at that stage, that's three years ago, the [union] you know, they might have had it down the bottom of their wish list; they didn't even mention it; the women who were delegates weren't pushing it. Every time we had a meeting I'd put up my hand to say, 'Don't forget paid maternity leave' and they'd be sitting at the table and telling us what they wanted and they wouldn't have said it, and I said, 'Oh, haven't you left off paid maternity leave?' At [local authority] I got paid maternity leave into their EBA. Coming from a teaching background you know, three months paid maternity leave has been in several years, and I had both of my children on paid maternity leave. So I just believe that it's one of the industrial rights of working women as your basic [right], and I had a lot of trouble getting it into the [local authority] EBA, more trouble than I had getting it in here. HR director Manuco

The actual decision to introduce PML had significant support from the CEO, who saw EEO/diversity action more broadly as consistent with both his business experience and his personal values:

I worked for a number of manufacturing organisations and I suppose I worked in some very tough industrial relations climates, and I have formed a view over many years that you can have a much greater success in manufacturing by actually embracing and involving the people than you can by trying to bludgeon them into submission. So I mean my personal
values are such that it's a respect and consideration and non-elitism if you like... So I guess my personal values always were well aligned with [Manuco's], but I also, through my working time before that, found that I had enormous success by actually involving people and working with people rather than trying to control them in the normal way... So when I had the opportunity to come here... I mean ultimately the thing that encouraged me to come was the fact that the culture was more aligned with my personal value system and I felt that there were enormous opportunities, but [also] that it was the environment that I could nurture and work in in a way that I felt that manufacturing should and could be done. CEO Manuco

At Healthco too the decision to introduce paid parental leave was initiated by the HR director, who had had significant HR experience in the UK:

When I came to Australia ... I was really staggered that Australia was so far behind the world in terms of paid maternity leave. I mean I keep joking with [the CEO] that I have two kids and I should make our Paid Parental Leave retrospective; that I missed out! HR director Healthco

This HR director had been specifically recruited by the CEO. He provided significant backing for her suggestion as well as latitude in which to pursue this and other HR initiatives within Healthco.

So we try and keep people thinking and also looking at better ways of doing things... reviewing how we're doing things all the time, looking at different strategies and you know, [the HR director], is a driver, there's no doubt about that, but we've got many of them. Personally I like people to have an opinion, and whether it agrees with my opinion or not is irrelevant, and I suppose by having the [management group], I'm actually promoting that in that I'm not the one that has all the right decisions. CEO Healthco

At Childco, the catalyst for the introduction of employee choice rostering (ECR) for registered nurses came from the newly appointed Director of Nursing. She came from a private sector nursing background and had had extensive experience with accreditation in the health sector. Once again, she was supported by a CEO who had recruited her specifically to guide change through the organisation and was prepared to support her proposal for ECR, at least partly because of his own experience with more rigid nursing rosters:

It was an initiative that [the Director of Nursing] started up here... [She] actually did it because I think having an appreciation of people's circumstances and obviously trying to work around the fact that people did have family commitments... and there was an opportunity there I guess to get coverage and still have people working at the times we need...She said, ‘How do you feel about [employee choice rostering]?’ and I said, ‘Well, I think that's fine. Just explain to me how you would go about it’. Because my background is nursing anyway ... so I go back to the days of it all being very heavy-handed; I guess in how nursing was sort of managed and so forth, and you did as you're told and all of those sorts of things. CEO Childco

**The interaction of drivers: three examples**

In all the case study organisations there was more than one driver or pressure to the EEO/diversity action researched. The ways in which specific drivers interact to provide pressure for action within particular organisations and their respective importance depends on
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the point in time action was being considered, the internal and external contexts in which this consideration takes place as well as the presence of individuals who champion the proposed action. In many cases there were clear links made between a number of drivers, such as the business benefits of enhanced stature and reputation. The linking and interaction of the key drivers identified in the case studies to specific EEO/diversity action is illustrated below in the cases of Finco, Busico and Carco.

Finco

Job-Share scheme

The job-share scheme has been in place for over twelve years. It has been possible to interview those close to the decision-making process around job-share at the time it was introduced, so the key drivers to action that existed at that time can be identified.

The immediate driver to the introduction of job-share provisions at Finco were industrial negotiations between Finco and the relevant union during the 1988/1989 National Wage Case negotiations, where in exchange for union agreement to the introduction of job evaluation to replace the longstanding age and service pay scale, Finco agreed, among other things to introduce job-share arrangements. In the view of the union the ‘trade-off’ was fairly inevitable and pragmatic:

Retrospectively, I'd say the union knew we had to go down that track [job evaluation]. We just decided to get something for it. There wasn't a lot of resistance, I wouldn't say in the union... it was just pragmatic... it really was a situation where they [Finco] didn't have any choice. They had to buy it, we weren't going to buy what they wanted otherwise, and so their industrial people no doubt put it... to them that ‘there's not too much harm in it, and we can't get what we really want without it’. Senior union organiser

While not a key driver, the business case for job-share was used by the union to persuade the bank about the benefits of job-share in the industrial negotiations:

It had to come down to a business case... it had to come down to the balance of cost, and the cost of retraining and recruitment... I mean certainly it was partly business driven, and the case we put to them was, we always put the business case when we're trying to convince them of something... we didn't just put it in EEO terms. But I don't think they took that stuff seriously, I don't think it was articulated very seriously within [Finco], or really many other places until a few years after that. It started to get serious, people started to articulate that much more clearly, what the actual costs were. Senior union organiser

Within Finco, EEO staff also argued that job-share was a method of skill retention in the retail/branch network, retaining valued employees who may otherwise leave after maternity leave when part-time work was not available or suitable.

If you had a person who wants to work part-time but we want that job filled full time, then it was a win-win situation for [Finco] and for employees.. EEO/diversity manager, Finco

Personal leadership and commitment, both union and employer, was also a key driver to the introduction of job-share provisions. Interest in job-share initially came out of a review of maternity leave return to work provisions. The review was undertaken by EEO staff within
Finco, and discussed with the Union. One of the major issues to emerge was a relatively low return rate after maternity leave and the need for a response to increasing numbers of women wanting to work part-time in positions that had been designated as full time. In responding to this employee pressure, contact was made with both UK and Canadian banks in researching possible models for a job-share scheme.

[Finco] wanted casuals and there was a low resumption rate from maternity leave and it was just when people were starting to talk about flexibility or changed working arrangements. So that's why career breaks and job-sharing was put onto the agenda, and at that stage, there was no other organisations doing it cos I know... I did the research into career break and job-sharing. I had to write to British banks and Canadian banks in regards to job-sharing...

EEO/diversity manager, Finco

At the same time the union had been undertaking its own research in response to pressure from members:

We were just collecting information on what was going on particularly in the UK with job-sharing, career breaks, pro-rata part-time work. It was clearly coming through to us from our female membership that they didn't have sufficient work flexibility, so we were going to put together information about what initiatives were working where and what sort of things you could do. Senior union organiser

As highlighted in Chapter 4, sustaining of the job-share program and more recently the development of the job-share register, despite significant internal change and organisational downsizing and restructure, has been due in large part to the personal leadership and commitment of the manager responsible for EEO/diversity.

Busico

**Development of senior women managers program**

At Busico, the initial program aimed at the advancement of senior women within the company was initiated in one of the state offices around seven years ago. The main driver to this EEO/diversity action was concern by senior women within the organisation that Busico had few female partners or female executives. This driver had elements of a business case concerned with the retention of talented and senior women within the firm:

...it was seen as quite a strong leakage of obviously talented people because they've been recruited by the firm in the first place and they've been identified as someone either with a potential or already demonstrating that they were a valuable person. Female partner Busico

and such women as clients of, or as consultants to, Busico after they leave the firm:

Our vision is to retain our people longer overall, and some more through the partnership. That's a huge business driver for us because there's a huge cost in training and retraining and developing people. The secondary part of that is to create a strong alumni... [connection so that]... when people leave our firm, men or women, they have (a) a nice bond back to the firm, so it's sort of a lifetime experience, and (b) if they ever end up in a position where they don't want to work full time or they don't want to have the same sort of situation, we have access to that talent pool. CEO Busico
The attraction and retention of ‘top performers’ in the industry in which Busico is located has become more and more competitive as traditional career path models change with generational influence. Taking action about the low representation of women at senior levels in Busico was also driven by the right thing to do in raising the stature and reputation of the firm as an employer of choice, and as part of a broad business case in attracting female clients:

*I think it is also the right thing to do, and the fact that we want to be seen... well, so there's the business case which is pure dollars, there's also the loss of talented people, you want the firm to have the best talent pool that it possibly could, there's also a PR element that you want to be seen as an employer of choice, and let's not forget that women also make decisions out there about buying services.* Female partner Busico

Concern with external recognition in turn was driven not only by the business benefits it could deliver but also by the benefits it would bring for organisational commitment and cohesion.

*External recognition is important from two points of view. One, amazingly it actually helps us drive these programs internally... people are proud of being Employer of Choice, they're proud that [this EEO/diversity action] is successful. Those things are really important to us internally. So that's (a) and that's probably the most important [and] (b), it does help in the market place. It helps in the market place as being seen as a progressive firm and one that sees culture... as very important to the way that we operate.* CEO Busico

One of the direct catalysts to getting the program off the ground was that the US operation of Busico had launched a similar program and had received a lot of positive external and internal publicity about this initiative. Research undertaken in the US to support the action also resonated with research undertaken by an informal network of senior women located in one of Busico’s state offices.

*Personal leadership commitment* was critical to Busico taking this initial EEO/diversity action. The decision to have a program to develop women within the company was driven by one of the few women partners, who had established an informal network of senior women within one of the state offices. Support from the CEO, senior management and the managing partner in the state office in which she worked was also won because of her profile within the organisation. This partner was well known both internally and externally for her commitment to diversity and the advancement of women:

*And the reason why I had this focus was it was a very lonely place to be... I would sit back and see what was happening to increase the numbers and there seemed to be this sense of complacency... But anyway we had that situation where there were no emerging female partners in the pipeline in [our state] office. There was a lot of conversation that went on at a high level. The CEO going back ten years was very keen.* Female partner Busico

The initial incarnation of the program was focused predominantly in one state. This action has now been replaced by a new nationally-focused program launched recently. While still focused on career and employment issues of senior female staff, this program is being steered by the head office of Busico’s Australian operation. The reworking of the initial program has also been driven by changes in CEOs and in changes in personal leadership commitment to the program. However the main drivers to the revamping of the program are very similar to
those of the initial program. Once again *Busico* has been able to leverage off research and activity undertaken by its US operation in reworking its strategies to achieve a better gender representation at senior levels of the organisation.

**Paid Parental Leave**

PPL was first introduced into *Busico* on an informal basis when one of the very few female partners became pregnant in the mid 1990s. It was more formally introduced as an organisation-wide paid parental leave policy in 1998.

The *business case* was a significant driver to the introduction of PPL at *Busico*, which focused on the attraction and retention of talented women. However, the *right thing to do* in enhancing the stature and reputation of the firm and in providing a ‘level playing field’ for women were also important pressures for action.

*There's a little bit about levelling the plane here so that if you want someone to come in and be able to have a family as well, you've got to try and have as level a plane as you can, and I think that's how [PPL] contributes strongly to it.* CEO *Busico*

As part of the *right thing to do*, the increased awareness of work/life balance in the late 1990s, compared with earlier times also provided significant impetus to the introduction of paid leave. Indeed the provision of PPL within the company is seen as having societal ramifications beyond *Busico*:

*If we can foster the right environment here then marriages will be more successful, families will be happy, kids will be nurtured, we won’t have kids out on the street doing all sorts of things because if their parents have got to work hard to put food on the table... if they have an understanding boss who is more flexible about the arrangements [then] it is a holistic [approach].* Female partner *Busico*

A secondary driver to the introduction of paid parental leave was its perceived contribution to *organisational commitment and cohesion* by creating an environment of flexibility where people are measured on contribution and output rather than time spent in the office.

While there is a frank recognition within *Busico* that it is women who will access PPL, the rationale for PPL rather than PML was its gender-neutral focus. A *business case* rationale influenced the quantum and basis of leave provided, with the larger amount of leave (four months) paid to managers than to other eligible staff (two months) directly related to the perceived increased cost savings in the retention of senior women. Similarly the requirement that senior staff return to work before receiving the second instalment of two months leave was designed as an incentive to return so that *Busico* could maximise the return on its investment.

**Carco**

**Paid Maternity Leave**

*Carco* had paid six weeks of paid maternity leave as part of its enterprise award since 1998. In 2002, a decision was made to increase the quantum of that leave to 14 weeks. It is the extension of that leave that is the focus of this study.
The right thing to do, both in terms of social justice/gender equity and increasing the firm’s reputation and stature, appears to have been a major driver to increasing PML to 14 weeks. This is clearly articulated by the CEO both internally and externally. Importantly, the publicity generated about the announcement of the increased quantum of PML also provided a profile for the Carco’s work-life strategy discussed below.

The need to improve the gender balance/diversity of the company was an important driver to the increase in PML. This in turn was clearly linked to the business case:

If I want my company to be successful, I need to attract women, to be able to deal with women in other parts of the business, and if that's going to... if I have to do that by offering ‘a’, and if it helps business at the end of the day, then I should offer ‘a’ because at the end of the day, we are here to build the vehicles, satisfy customers and get a return on our investment. Sales director, Carco

As part of the right thing to do, increasing the reputation and stature of the company and of its senior leadership was also a reason given for the decision to increase the quantum of PML:

We want to be an employer of choice... it's one of the key messages that we try to promote... At the end of the day I think [14 weeks PML] all adds to Carco’s image as a good corporate citizen ... companies are moving away from focusing on their financial returns, [to] corporate governance and so forth, that's where this kind of thing comes in. PR manager Carco

[Senior management] are trying to create Carco as a business and a business leader. So we don't want to be seen just as a car manufacturer. Part of that strategy... is to get [the CEO’s] face and to get his opinion on the business pages so that [Carco] is seen as a business leader. EEO/diversity manager, Carco

Indeed the right thing to do was linked with the personal leadership commitment of the CEO to improved gender representation, as highlighted below:

This is a policy issue, not so much a business case, at least for me. Of course it's nice if you [can] ultimately say it's cheaper, to do that and that, but for me, it's much more a philosophical policy thing. Women belong [in the workplace] today and should have equal rights [with men] to have an equally good job, and [what] we have to do and to learn is to structure women’s jobs around their disadvantages, and that's as easy as that, and then the business case helps if push come to shove—the business case for me is secondary... it's that we get the women back who we have [purposively] hired as high performers. CEO Carco

At the same time, the right thing to do was seen to make good business sense:

In the new millennium, a leading edge employer understands the value of their people and the value of them feeling good about what they do, and they're rewarded and recognised for doing that because that translates directly into performance and productivity improvement. So that's why we do this stuff... is because it makes business sense. It is also the right thing to do because we see ourselves as a community and as a part of the community, and as socially responsible. HR director, Carco
Personal leadership and commitment were crucial to driving the decision to increase the quantum of PML at the time this decision was taken. This leadership and commitment came from a number of areas. The CEO had come to Carco from a corporate background in Europe and had been surprised on his arrival in Australia by the lack of senior women in the company. He provided his personal support for EEO/diversity action, and placed more emphasis on the role of the HR function within the company to drive change than is traditionally the case in the industry. He presided over a period where the representation of women on Carco’s board increased fourfold.

The new HR director appointed by the CEO to drive organisational change was also seen as a significant enabler of the decision to increase PML:

In those days before [the HR director], this wouldn't have even got to the board... it wouldn't have been an issue. [The HR director] is the driving force behind a lot of the stuff to do with this. I mean she is passionate about work/life ... this is her background... So you know, if she moved on, then maybe the whole issue of work-life would go off the agenda... EEO/diversity manager Carco

as was the female presence on the board:

It helps to have three female board members sitting around the table because for them it's a real issue. They've all got children. EEO/diversity manager Carco

It was also the right time. The community focus on the national PML scheme proposed by the federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Pru Goward, provided an important impetus for the decision to put a proposal up to Carco’s board. Indeed the quantum of the extended PML reflects the fourteen weeks of the Sex Discrimination Commissioner’s proposal and the ILO standards on which this was based.

Carco specifically rejected the practice in a number of other large corporations of paying half the quantum of PML to employees after they return for a specific period of time—on the basis that the company ‘wanted to encourage trust’ among its employees. Part of the rationale of having the extended PML in company policy rather than in the company’s industrial awards or agreements was the desire for this EEO/diversity action to be an HR rather than an industrially negotiated initiative and for Carco to be seen as taking a proactive stance for its employees without the involvement of the relevant union. However after recent union negotiations the fourteen weeks PML has been incorporated in Carco’s new enterprise agreement.

Work/life strategy
Around three years ago Carco developed its broad work/life strategy, which is currently focused specifically on a number of areas including retirement planning, health and wellbeing, supporting families and flexible work arrangements. Together with some new initiatives, the strategy brought together a number of ad hoc and informal arrangements into a more coherent framework.

This broad overarching strategy had a number of drivers. Both the right thing to do in increasing the diversity/gender balance at Carco and improving organisational commitment and cohesion to support the significant organisational change taking place were important drivers in the introduction of the work/life strategy at Carco.
The right thing to do was perhaps the major impetus to the introduction of work/life strategy: it was seen as a mechanism for both increasing the diversity/gender balance of the organisation and the reputation and stature of the company, without taking a gender-specific focus.

...the difficulty has always been for our organisation that we have an overriding vision that ‘Yes, we want to improve the gender balance, but no, we can't positively discriminate’... we still have to take the best person for the job... typically, people didn't want to go out there and say, 'look, this is only available to women', so we didn't necessarily want to do anything as obvious as that. So that's where it is quite difficult to promote Carco as an employer of choice for women without actually saying it... HR manager Carco

The work/life strategy was seen as a way of both improving and demonstrating Carco’s diversity:

So if we want to put diversity into action, developing a work/life program and addressing people’s needs and requests for flexibility and the aging workforce and all that other stuff that is coming to bear on [Carco], is a good way of actually demonstrating diversity. EEO/diversity manager Carco

This is also linked to a business case driver both generally in the case of business outcomes:

Diversity breeds innovation and innovation helps produce business results... we know that from business research that if you have diversity in your workforce, then you will get better results HR director Carco

and specifically in better meeting the demands and expectations of customers:

From a business case it was to be more responsive to our customers, to acknowledge that women were buying cars, and how can we deliver to a global diverse market when we ourselves are not diverse. EEO/diversity manager Carco
Chapter 3 Taking EEO/diversity action

The contexts and drivers to EEO/diversity action in the nine case studies have been outlined in Chapter 2. This chapter looks at how the case study organisations went about taking EEO/diversity action, from achieving agreement within the organisation to taking particular action to implement that agreement.

The first section looks at how internal organisational agreement was achieved on the particular content and scope of specific EEO/diversity action and at the goals and performance indicators of that action, where these were articulated. The second section examines how the action was initiated within the organisation, where the action was located and the organisational procedures and policies used to support it. The third and final section looks at different implementation approaches taken in the case study organisations and the extent to which barriers and problems are anticipated.

Agreeing on and setting targets for action

The internal organisational process of negotiating and agreeing on specific EEO/diversity action varied considerably across the case study organisations. In several organisations some of the arguments or reasons used as drivers to action, such as the business case or 'the right thing to do', were used as persuaders or legitimisers in achieving agreement on action. As part of the negotiating process within several organisations, the cost of resourcing specific action played a small but an important role in achieving the ultimate agreement of the CEO, the executive and/or board. However, even where the business case had been a key driver to action or was used to achieve agreement to take action, the establishment of specific performance benchmarks or targets before taking action was rare.

Achieving agreement on action

Various things will come into play... the data might win the argument on this day, the culture might win it on another day, so it's both ... and it's challenging, you know, 'Well, why not do it?'  
HR director Healthco

The strategic use of a range of arguments to secure CEO, executive and or board agreement was present in most of the case studies. These arguments were similar to those that had worked to motivate organisations to take EEO/diversity action in the first place. The business case and 'the right thing to do'—both in terms of meeting community standards and enhancing the reputation and stature of the organisation—were the most frequently reported arguments employed to secure agreement about the EEO/diversity action to be taken. The type of arguments used and the efficacy of those arguments depended to a large extent on the specific internal context and external environment at the time that the EEO/diversity action was proposed. Likewise the specific mechanisms and discourses used to anticipate and/or
negotiate any opposition to the proposed action reflected the broader organisational culture. The ease or difficulty of achieving agreement on specific EEO/diversity action largely reflected where the impetus for that action was located within the organisation and where those proposing the action sat within the management structure and culture.

For example, at Manuco it was the HR director who had proposed the provision of PML for employees within the company. She had the full support of the organisation’s CEO to initiate a range of actions consistent with a broad EEO goal of ‘looking after our people’. Before the proposal was put forward by the company in enterprise bargaining negotiations, agreement was sought from Manuco’s senior management team, which was easily won. The retention-based argument also shaped the basis of the PML provision, half of which would be provided on return to work:

*I talked to them about retention; I talked to them about the cost of people leaving the organisation. We did put in that you know, you would leave and you wouldn't get half of that until you return after a certain amount of time. So we talked about that as a strategy. Look, it wasn't hard. The management team were receptive to those sorts of things, and I mean there's a bottom line, there's this argument that shows how cheap it is, because [it is] six weeks pay as against a year's pay if somebody leaves and someone else has to come up to scratch.* HR director Manuco

Across Manuco supervisory support for the proposal was achieved because PML was seen to contribute to a supportive workplace culture:

*We all agreed that it's a good idea because we just consider there are lots of women here ... [it's] not ... a strategy that was put in place that would have that motivation for them to come back but because it's just a help to them.* EEO/diversity manager Manuco

At Funco, a proposal for PML had previously been knocked back by the executive management team. In winning agreement for a new proposal put forward by HR, emphasis was placed on the modesty of the proposal and ‘getting ahead of the game’:

*What we thought we would do is start out small, and then they could... gradually grow it. I mean essentially we sold the argument on the basis of, ‘look, it's an argument in the public arena at the moment, it won't be too long before it is a requirement whether it be government funded or company funded’, so let's get ahead of the game and use it as a bit of a reason for a choice.* HR senior manager Funco

Given that an earlier proposal for PML had not won the support of the executive, the fact that the issue was one of community debate at the time was also seen as critical to securing the agreement of the executive team:

*I guess my honest opinion about paid maternity [leave] is more that it became and has become quite a hot issue. I'm not sure the organisation would have done it for any other reason.* Operations manager Funco

While not a key driver for the introduction of PML, a business case argument was also put forward to persuade executive management about the business benefits of the proposal:
Drivers & Contexts of EEO/Diversity Action

What we then decided was that we needed to go back and identify what would be the business case for introducing some form of paid maternity leave, and what we wanted was a rationale for the women who would come back to us, return to the workforce, and the skills that we would not lose and that the cost in replacing those people and the loss of their knowledge. So we worked it up that way... we did some figures on just very low percentages, very conservative figures about... if we could assist in stopping the loss of employee numbers to the extent of X, what that savings would be and what knowledge we retain, and we ran a case along those lines at the Executive Committee to say, ‘look, not only is it smart, but it makes good business sense’. HR director Funco

As highlighted above, the retention-based business case used at both Manuco and Funco played an important legitimising role in securing the ‘sign off’ by the senior management team and indeed shaped the form of PML finally offered. However in both cases the use of the business case argument was largely rhetorical; retention of staff after taking maternity leave was not a significant issue at either company. Indeed at Manuco, the retention rate of staff after maternity leave has always been exceptionally high.

At Busico, one strategy used by the HR director in winning agreement of the company’s predominantly male executive to the revamped senior women managers’ program was to appeal to broad social expectations, at least in principle, about EEO for women even at very senior levels:

This is really an exercise in shifting men’s perceptions about the importance of a program like this but also trying to shift them around some of the deeply ingrained cultural, wider societal issues around how women are viewed and around their capability and about being a worker and being mothers and these sorts of things. So what I did within that whole environment there, with the national executive when I spoke about this program and I spoke about pathways not positions I said ‘I am sure you share with me the aspiration to have at least 50 percent of women around this table and for some of you not to be here.’ HR director Busico

At Unico, any slight concern by the executive team was allayed by the relatively small cost of increased PML:

I think there was no overt resistance to it. Although I think at the very beginning there might have been ‘oh that’s a bit generous’. In other words ‘noticing’ but there was no real resistance. I suppose the other side of it was that we know that we don’t have a lot of women pregnant at any particular time, a factor of our demographics—age and otherwise. HR director, Unico

The process of achieving agreement worked in a number of instances to refine the specific action. For example at Socialco, concern about retaining program managers had focused attention on the possibilities of salary packaging. However before agreement on the precise details of the packaging could be worked out, extensive consultation with staff and managers was undertaken. Information about the pay rates and salary sacrificing practices in other agencies was collected and the accountant and CEO embarked on modelling various options which were discussed and refined through consultation with a staff committee. After the agreement of the board was obtained, information about the specific details of the proposed salary sacrificing arrangements was provided at staff meetings across the agency and staff had
the opportunity to have the implications of the proposed arrangements worked out on an individual basis.

At Healthco the HR director presented various options to the executive in terms of PML as well as arguing it should be PPL. To win support for employee choice rostering, the HR director invested a lot of time in convincing not only the executive but also the unit managers responsible for rosters.

_They saw the reality. I mean it wasn't like your daily fight. It was nurturing and I guess probably I did it in a different way where I kind of worked with the managers and got the evidence, listened to the concerns and developed systems with them to address those concerns, and also to discuss with them and brainstorm if we didn't do it what would the picture look like._ HR director Healthco

In four case studies, the specific EEO/diversity action was negotiated as part of a union enterprise bargaining agreement. However, the specific action tabled by management, or by the union in the case of Finco, was not altered in this process. This is because in most instances the action proposed by management exceeded industry provision and union claims in other similar organisations. In one case study, Socialco, the EEO/diversity action was part of a non-union certified agreement and staff formally voted to accept the remuneration packaging as part of the agreement process. In most other case studies employees were informed, but not formally consulted, about the introduction of specific EEO/diversity action.

In most organisations, some small opposition or concern was expressed by managers and/or co-workers, either covertly or overtly, when the specific EEO/diversity action/s were first mooted. Anticipating and dealing effectively with any opposition and concern were seen by most case study organisations as critical to successful implementation. At Socialco for example, the organisation undertook to ensure that no employee would be worse off under the new salary sacrificing arrangements. While the remuneration packaging produced different benefits for different groups (middle managers doing best), there was the view that staff accepted this:

... everyone was going to be so much better off that it didn't become an issue... [they understand] it's a disaster when a Program Manager leaves. Senior program manager Socialco

At Manuco concern was expressed initially by newer employees that the introduction of PML would be traded off against pay increases or other workplace benefits. It was only after the EBA was finalised that it became clear that there would not be any such trade-off.

When Busico introduced a revamped version of their senior women managers’ program, there was an awareness of, and preparation for, a possible backlash:

...for a lot of men a women’s program looks like it’s creating positions that aren’t necessarily based on merit. That’s a fear that men have and you would have come across that before. This is not about merit and not about creating positions for people who should not otherwise be there. So I know that’s a fear, I know that is a deeply built-in prejudice. So the way I counter that is to talk about pathways [not positions] which is less confronting. I think it actually opens up dialogue, but [it] also names some of the implicit assumptions about what these programs are about. It challenges that. HR director Busico
While a business case argument for retaining talent was used to forestall a possible backlash to the senior women managers’ program, it was also linked with an EEO discourse which focuses not only on access, but also EEO outcomes for women:

*What we did was we also developed a list of frequently asked questions and answers for all of the people involved so that if anyone got any comments or questions, we had consistent answers to give, and we've come back to, well, it's a business issue because what we're doing is we've been recruiting 50-50 for ten years and people making it through to partnership ranks are not making it through in the same proportion, so there's one or two decisions we can make here. We're losing talented people and that obviously has an effect on the bottom line because every person that [you lose] you have to replace.* Partner Busico

Today, while focused on women, the new Busico program is broadly expressed in gender-neutral terms. This is seen to make the program more mainstream and less contentious than the earlier program.

**Resourcing action**

Even where the business case was a key driver for EEO/diversity action and/or was used to secure agreement to the proposed action, detailed costings of the proposed initiative were rarely undertaken. As highlighted above, the emphasis in many of the case study organisations was on a rough estimate of the cost-effectiveness of a specific action, rather than the preparation of a sophisticated cost-benefit analysis:

*We didn't have a retention problem... it was more just, 'Let's implement a benefit [PML] that other progressive companies are implementing, let's look at the cost-effectiveness of that.' ... It was cost-effective and so it was put up and it went through.* EEO/diversity coordinator Funco

Such cost-effectiveness was reduced in many instances to the senior management team being satisfied that specific action would not incur significant additional costs. For example, at Carco the small proportion of women, and at Unico the age profile of the organisation, meant that relatively few women would access PML and that the cost to the organisations would be relatively small. At Unico, the cost of PML was estimated at a small percentage of the salary budget—with the requirement for two years service reducing costs still further.

In other organisations, existing budget constraints provided the parameters to action taken. At Socialco, as with most community sector organisations, limited funding means there is a constant tension between providing a high quality service to as many clients as possible and providing adequate wages and conditions for staff. This tension in exacerbated when the budget relies to a large extent on public fundraising. Thus securing agreement of the Socialco board to wage increases through salary sacrificing depended on ensuring the initiative was cost-neutral:

*... we worked out how much money would be available, given the changes of the tax laws, what would be freed up, and then kind of worked backwards from that... trying to come up with a spread... I mean clearly overall we couldn't cost any more money.* Program manager Socialco
Any overall cost-benefit analysis was often undertaken by ‘gut feel’ rather than being quantified. At Manuco for example, while specific initiatives such as PML were seen as having a tangible cost, this was seen as irrelevant in terms of the real, but unquantified, value gained from ‘looking after’ employees:

I mean we are talking a lot of money here for the things that we do for our people, and some people might say, ‘Look, we treat our operators too good’, or ‘You treat your staff too good’, but from [the CEO’s] perspective, if what we're spending on one hand and if you're getting back in the other hand and it's more than what... I mean if your output is more than your input then you're on a winner really. Quality engineer Manuco

At Healthco, the costs of the specific model of PPL chosen were estimated. The view of senior management was that this cost was insignificant in terms of the marketing opportunity it provided and the commitment to staff it demonstrated:

[it was] absolutely a marketing opportunity. We were the leaders in terms of paid parental leave, and people within the organisation felt, ‘Well, you know, the organisation is ahead of the game, they're looking after me, they're thinking ahead for me’... There may be better schemes, there may be worse schemes, but the very powerful statement was that we took the initiative as an employer, and we took that initiative because from the business point of view [it] was (a) good marketing opportunity, we wanted to remain the lead in the field, and (b) it's the right thing to do for staff. HR director Healthco

Indeed the CEO and the HR director at Healthco suggested that the internal discussion about the PPL proposal was more on ‘what would be the costs if we didn’t do it (PPL)’, than actually weighing up the costs of providing such leave.

**Establishment of performance targets/outcomes**

Before the specific EEO/diversity action was first introduced, several case study organisations identified broad performance targets and outcomes. These included targets such as:

- improved representation of women in senior positions
- enhanced skill development of senior women
- improved representation of women in non-traditional areas
- improved workplace culture and cohesion
- increased retention of specific groups
- widespread uptake of the initiative, particularly work/family action
- enhanced reputation and profile of organisation

Documentation provided indicated that specifying quantifiable performance targets in relation to specific EEO/diversity action was uncommon. One of the exceptions was Busico where a specific target of the senior women’s program was to increase the number of women partners in the firm by ten percent.

While most case study organisations used HR indicators to assess the outcomes of EEO/diversity action, particularly in reports to the EOWA, few specified any performance targets before the EEO/diversity action was implemented. One of the organisations that did,
Healthco, identified a number of key performance targets relating to HR indicators such as absenteeism and turnover. Employee satisfaction was also nominated as a key indicator in measuring the contribution of employee choice rostering to attracting and retaining nursing staff. This worked to make the measures more transparent at Healthco and—as noted below—data collected on these and other indicators were communicated both to management and staff.

Initiating Action

This section looks at the policy and strategic context in which specific EEO/diversity action was initiated. The specific EEO/diversity action taken in the case study organisations typically occurred within the framework of a broader EEO/diversity strategy, which was the responsibility of the HR or people services function within the organisation. In most instances responsibility for the implementation of the EEO/diversity action lay with HR staff. The scope and basis of the specific EEO/diversity action researched also varied across the case study organisations ranging from more discrete action to where the specific action was an integral part of a more holistic EEO/diversity strategy.

Integration with HR & business strategies

One of the issues considered in the research was the extent to which specific EEO/diversity action fits with and supports an organisation’s HR and business strategies. In all of the case studies, the specific EEO/diversity action researched was seen as part of a broader EEO/diversity strategy. Such strategies varied considerably, from clearly and formally articulated frameworks for action to broad and sometime informal policies. As noted in Chapter 2, these frameworks and policies differed in the extent to which a commitment to EEO was explicit. In some cases, the specific EEO/diversity action was seen as part of a work/life agenda. In other organisations, it was seen more as part of an EEO/diversity agenda or as part of a broad ‘looking after our people’ agenda.

Regardless of the different drivers to action, the major responsibility for EEO/diversity strategies rested with HR departments/personnel, with such strategies generally seen as a key HR function. However, while specific EEO/diversity action may form part of an HR ‘menu’ this does not necessarily mean that EEO/diversity action is part of a general HR strategy. In Childco for example, the introduction of employee choice rostering was confined to registered nursing staff.

In a number of case studies, the nature of the industry and the type of work undertaken worked to create a direct link between HR and business strategies. At Healthco, with the critical need to recruit and retain skilled nursing staff, and at Busico, with the company’s core business relying on those who deliver it, the broad EEO/diversity strategy was seen as being critical to meeting key requirements of the company’s business strategy.

We have two assets -people and clients -if we attract, advance and retain the best people because of the way we value them, and if we deliver the best solutions to our clients, then the bottom line will be in good shape. Partner Busico
In other industries, such as manufacturing or finance, the link between HR and business strategies may not always appear as direct, including where there may be business drivers to specific EEO/diversity action. What appears to be crucial to the alignment of EEO/diversity strategies with HR and business strategies is whether an explicit link is made between the organisation’s people and business outcomes. For example, at Carco gender balance is seen as part of the ‘people’ component, which is one of the seven components which constitute the Carco business strategy. However it is the congruence of these messages in mission statements and in internal policies and practice that integrates EEO/diversity action and business strategies. For example, at Manuco the specific focus of the HR strategy is to attract, retain and develop ‘the very best people’ and EEO/diversity strategies are viewed as an important source of input into strategic business thinking. This is explicitly linked in company internal and external documentation to the ‘development of the full potential of all staff’, including through EEO/diversity action.

…the HR or the people side of it is more important than anything else. It has the largest focus. I have a view that anyone can invest in money, in capital, that anyone can go and buy the productive resources, anyone can put the manufacturing methodology in place that we have in place, anyone can pay some money to have some technology developed. I mean that's just a matter of how much money you want to spend. The thing that I felt was going to give us the greatest competitive advantage was to make sure that our people were 110 percent committed, and that we were in fact able, not only to have total commitment, but that we were to be an employer of choice... that was the overriding, I think, competitive advantage that we wanted to give ourselves. CEO Manuco

At Healthco, the connection between EEO/diversity strategies and HR and business strategies is also promoted internally:

The focus on support for employees to balance their work and family responsibilities has contributed to the continuous growth of [Healthco] in a competitive environment. Healthco staff newsletter

Like Healthco, Manuco’s internal and external messages are remarkably consistent—which suggests a high congruence and understanding at different levels within the organisation of the link between business outcomes and EEO/diversity action. For example the link between 'quality' and 'treating people well and giving them responsibility' is clearly articulated by those outside HR or corporate management:

We have close to 700 people, we have a ‘Quality Department’ of ten people, but in actual fact, we have a quality department of 700 people. Quality manager Manuco

In several other case studies, senior managers who were interviewed stated they considered HR played a vital role in achieving business goals, and the focus on EEO/diversity action was an important part of this. However, this was not always reflected in formal business plans, mission statements and other documentation. For example, at Funco, while employees are publicly seen as a key asset of the company, formal documentation does not draw a clear line between people and business outcomes. Nevertheless in practice EEO/diversity action is seen by senior HR management to fit in with both business objectives and the overall HR planning which supports them:
I think the advancement of women fits in with our overall business objectives in this way... in that when you look at our business planning process, one of the key ingredients of that is retention of our key employees, and secondly, the overall human resources planning that goes with that with regards to the attraction, development and retention of the right people at the right time, doing the right jobs. HR director Funco

Scope and basis of action

In this research the major focus was on specific EEO/diversity action taken within a range of organisational contexts. As highlighted above in many cases such action was an integral part of a broad EEO/strategy, and in others it was more targeted and discrete. The scope and basis of this action also varied and appeared related to the different EEO/diversity discourses outlined in Chapter 2 as well as the different organisational contexts in which they were introduced.

In some organisations, the scope of specific EEO/diversity action focused on particular target groups. At Childco the introduction of employee choice rostering (ECR) was aimed at retaining the skills of a small group of registered nurses by providing them with better work/family balance. Unlike at Healthco, ECR at Childco has not been extended to other parts of the organisation. At Funco, there are a number of individual EEO/equality initiatives undertaken across different areas of the organisation, ranging from action directed at skill attraction/retention and work/life balance for permanent staff and better gender representation in management. While taken within the broad context of a company-wide EEO/diversity strategy, the scope of action is more concerned with providing individual access to EEO than addressing the organisational culture that might create barriers for women.

While in most case study organisations the specific EEO/diversity action researched was linked with other EEO/diversity initiatives, it was rare to find EEO/diversity action focused across different levels of the organisation. For example, while the advancement of senior women was a focus in a number of case study organisations, only Manuco had taken action to increase the skills/career pathways of women at the base of the organisation.

Factors such as how long EEO/diversity action has been in place, and contextual factors such the size and composition of the workforce and the extent to which an organisation is spread across worksites, also impact on the scope of action taken and the basis of that action. For example at Carco, where the organisation has relatively recently embarked on significant organisational and cultural change, the focus of the work/life strategy—while covering a wide range of diversity initiatives—is currently limited to white collar and salaried staff only. However this action represents the first phase of a more comprehensive EEO/diversity strategy and is seen by senior management as a vehicle for broader cultural change:

So the plan is definitely to go right throughout the organisation, but we're only two years into it, so it's going to take a fair while to get there. So we've been very strategic about where we're choosing to put our energies to get the most value. HR director Carco

The basis of the specific EEO/diversity action studied in each organisation also varied, reflecting different organisational contexts and different EEO/diversity discourses both across and within the organisations. The introduction of part-time work and other family-friendly arrangements, as well as senior management development and training, was typically
provided via negotiation between individual employees and their managers, within perceived organisational or business constraints. For example at *Manuco*, access to part-time work is negotiated on a case by case basis and as a response to individual requests for flexibility. However with its inclusive organisational culture, individual access to such benefits at *Manuco* can work to create a broad sense of entitlement across the organisation, as highlighted below.

**Implementing action**

Access to documentation and interviewees in the case study organisations allowed us to look closely at the process of implementation of specific EEO/diversity action. Different approaches were taken to implementation and the process of implementation of specific EEO/diversity action also varied, as did the ways in which particular EEO/diversity action was ‘sold’ internally and externally. In a number of case studies, planning for possible barriers or problems that might arise in implementation was an integral part of the introduction of EEO/diversity action.

**Approaches to implementation**

*The differentiator is not so much the policy or the strategy. It's the execution of that. We could all come up with similar strategic endeavours and vision statements and the like, but at the end of the day, it comes down to the execution, how we go about what we say we're about...*  
Group manager *Finco*

Different implementation approaches to specific EEO/diversity action appeared less related to the rationale for, or drivers to, action outlined in Chapter 2 than to internal organisational factors such as the way in which workplaces are structured and the internal workplace culture. Different implementation approaches were also related to organisational experience with previous diversity action and indeed different stages of organisational evolution around EEO/diversity. For example with its work/life strategy *Carco* was at the beginning of a journey that *Healthco* has been on for almost a decade.

Different organisational contexts and approaches more generally to EEO/diversity meant that the implementation of EEO/diversity action varied from case study to case study. For example, the implementation of ECR at *Childco* was carefully discussed at board level. However, it remains a practice rather than a formal policy and has not been extended beyond a small group of registered nursing staff. At *Finco*, job-share was initially trialled with 100 people. It was found to be a ‘smashing success’, with both staff and customers positive about it, despite initial concerns by management. Initially concentrated in branch, operational and secretarial roles, attempts have been made to extend uptake into management and a job-share register has been put in place to assist staff find job-share partners.

At *Busico*, action taken to advance senior women has been in place for over a decade. While this action has been sustained through leadership and organisational change, its focus has changed from an initial and explicit focus on women, to a gender-neutral program and then back to a gender-neutral initiative focused on women. Such refocusing, based on monitoring and evaluation, has been critically strategic in maintaining and invigorating this EEO/diversity action. A commitment to a sustained continuous approach to the
implementation of EEO/diversity action is also reflected in the implementation of PML in a number of the case study organisations. Both before and during the research, four organisations—Carco, Healthco, Manuco and Unico—had increased the quantum of PML/PPL available to eligible employees.

In those case study organisations where EEO/diversity action was directly linked to the business strategy, implementation of such action was typically seen as ongoing rather than as a ‘one-off’. At Healthco for example, the implementation of the PPL and ECR was seen as contributing to overall organisational change, with these EEO/diversity initiatives seen to both drive and demonstrate this change.

The integration of EEO/diversity action and change outcomes also occurred where organisational values were used to market such action internally. For example, at Busico action around the advancement of senior women was positioned clearly within the set of organisational values, with case studies detailed in staff in-house publications, on the staff intranet, as well as in presentations from female partners. At Manuco EEO/diversity action was marketed internally via a ‘managing diversity’ pamphlet and in internal staff news via case studies. The implementation of EEO/diversity action was also marketed externally.

External recognition is important for a number of organisations, particularly those that see particular EEO/diversity action as enhancing their reputation or contributing to an employer of choice status. However at Socialco external publicity for EEO/diversity action for staff has to be carefully managed:

*Now, if we were portrayed as winning an award as an EEO organisation, what will happen? The subtext is they’re not really looking after the kids. We can’t afford to do so. What advantage would it bring us? We do what we do, anywhere, whether you’re around or not... We want to get medals that actually get donors to give us money.* - CEO Socialco

**How barriers/problems are dealt with**

In implementing EEO/diversity action barriers and problems inevitably arise. Organisations that had taken a continuous approach to implementation were more likely to plan for, become aware of, and be able to manage such difficulties. For example, Healthco uses its middle management group to implement action, including specific EEO/diversity initiatives, and also to provide feedback on problems that arise in implementation:

*...there's twelve of us on it and that to me has become the decision-making body of the organisation, and the logic behind that was that sometimes you know, the executive tries to get out as much as they can around the organisation, but it's a large organisation and it's pretty ugly out there all the time. So by having a broader group, hopefully it means when we do make a decision about something, we're more informed because we're actually a bit closer to the workforce and therefore have a greater understanding of how it is, what impacts [action has], and so on.* - CEO Healthco

At Healthco, ongoing employee consultation and management training are key implementation strategies when action is taken. A specific implementation plan has been devised for the attraction/retention of nursing staff. This action plan has short-term, medium-term and long-term goals; it involves analysing employee satisfaction survey results,
identifying the relevant corporate objectives and communicating these—and the results of survey and strategies to address issues—to hospital staff.

With employee choice rostering one of the major issues is striking an ongoing balance between employee requests and operational demands:

At the end of the day, I still have to have a safe working roster, and my responsibility as [nurse unit manager] is to make sure that the skill mix is right on each shift, or as good as it can be, and also to make sure that I've got a safe level of staffing … staff know that the only time that I will not back a reasonable roster request is if it impacts too much on the skill mix … it's an ongoing monitoring system… once your patients are in and going through the theatre process, you can't just phone up theatre and say, 'stop operating on that patient, I haven't got enough nurses', it doesn't work that way. Nurse unit manager Healthco

As highlighted in the discussion in Chapter 5, where possible problems and barriers to the successful implementation of specific EEO/diversity action were not anticipated and planned for, the outcomes of such action appeared to be limited.
Chapter 4  Monitoring and outcomes of action

This chapter looks at how the case study organisations went about monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of specific EEO/diversity action. In the first section we describe the outcome measures nominated and the ways in which they were used to monitor initiatives in the case study organisations. The second section focuses on the outcomes of the specific EEO/diversity action researched from a number of perspectives: the targets of specific initiatives; management and co-workers, and against the broader organisational goals set out for the particular action. The third and final section canvases experiences within the case study organisations as to whether taking EEO/diversity action leads to further EEO/diversity action.

Monitoring action

The importance of monitoring and evaluating the impact of specific EEO/diversity action is promoted both in the literature and by agencies such as the EOWA. Indeed the reporting requirements of the EOWW Act assume that progress against EEO/diversity targets is measured and assessed in an ongoing way.

Perhaps surprisingly, we found that relatively few case study organisations in this study systematically assessed the impact of specific EEO/diversity action and/or broader EEO/diversity strategies. In some instances this was because the specific initiatives were relatively recent, such as at Unico and Carco. In other cases, while broad HR indicators were used to demonstrate overall progress, there was little analysis of how a specific initiative may have contributed to, for example, decreasing turnover or absenteeism. The following analysis reflects data and documentation made available as well as the informal assessments of key personnel in the case study organisations.

Outcome measures

When interviewees were asked about how they measured the outcomes of EEO/diversity action, three main types of measures were highlighted:

- HR indicators such as absenteeism and turnover; which may be used (rarely) to highlight the specific outcomes of EEO/diversity action and (more often) the outcomes of broader workforce change of which the specific EEO/diversity action was a key part
- both specific and general benchmarking against what other companies, both in the relevant industry and those seen as corporate leaders more generally, are doing. For example, Hewitt Associates ‘Best Employer’ annual survey was used by a number of case studies to benchmark company practice around work/family balance
- broad business performance indicators, such as profit and shareholder return.
Healthco was one of the few case study organisations that systematically assessed the impact of EEO/diversity action such as ECR and PPL from a number of perspectives. Some of these measures include:

- patient surveys to measure quality of care complaints/compliments
- human resource data on labour turnover, absenteeism
- agency costs
- ease of recruitment data
- staff returning after maternity/parental leave
- staff climate/opinion surveys

However not all measures used are strictly quantitative, particularly those that go to what is described as the ‘health of the organisation’. The HR director for example also keeps an eye on the:

...degree of unresolved conflict in the organisation... we look at why this is re-emerging and we go back in and take some proactive soundings. So it's that... it's the number of issues of unresolved conflict where people are backed into corners you know... keep an eye on it via usage of employee counselling services etc.

There is constant and significant evaluation of both the business returns and the health of the organisation. The need to balance the two is seen to be ongoing:

If we don't get that right it means we have a bad month from the point of view of return on investment and all that sort of stuff... It's a fine line because if you push too hard, then quality starts to be compromised, so it's a juggling thing between the quality and the return on investment, and you've got to get that right. CEO Healthco

Most case study organisations carried out some general monitoring against HR indicators. At Funco, for example, monitoring of such things as tenure of female staff and the gender breakdown of training spend, promotion, transfer and termination occur on a regular basis. However, while organisational level data on work/family balance in terms of employee satisfaction from the Hewitt Associates ‘Best Employer’ annual survey is used, this is not broken down by gender. Nor does data collected typically include Funco’s many casual employees, who are overwhelmingly women.

However, at Funco the requirements of reporting under the EOWA has clearly encouraged the collection of a gender breakdown of a range of data such as training spend and turnover. Indeed EOWA reporting more generally is seen as a very useful mechanism to both review and encourage action around EEO/diversity:

… it's created a conscious focus on the issues, it's provided a process to be able to measure results and ensure that [we're] not only in compliance mode, but we're trying to achieve best practice, and it's exposed us to what other organisations are doing and provided some benchmarking opportunities as well. EEO/diversity manager Funco

In some organisations business performance indicators appeared on the face of it to have little direct link to the outcomes of specific EEO/diversity action. For example at Finco the company uses three major indicators to measure its overall performance.
Drivers & Context of EEO/Diversity Action

Certainly shareholder returns is the key, and the key component of that is net profit. We measure ourselves really on three major indices. One is profitability, one is customer service and that goes to the perception of us in the market place, which clearly has an impact on the first, and the other is the quality of our leadership. Retail HR manager Finco

At Carco too the measures of overall corporate performance seem far removed from any assessment of the impact of EEO/diversity action where the main business performance measures cited by the CEO are profit, return on net assets, and the financial sustainability of the Australian operation.

However while clear lines may not be drawn between business performance and EEO/diversity action, and quantitative assessment may not be made of the contribution of such action to overall business performance, in many organisations, such as Finco, the contribution of EEO/diversity action such as job-share and PML is taken for granted, at least within HR:

While it is hard to measure the success of these programs in terms of dollars and cents, [Finco] has been able to retain valued and experienced staff. EEO/diversity officer Finco

One of the issues is the extent to which collection and analysis of data is used as a platform for further change. For example, it may appear from exit interviews that women’s frustration with lack of training opportunities in a particular organisation is much higher than men’s. However particularly in those organisations where the dissemination of such data remained internal to HR, monitoring and evaluation was not typically linked to ongoing action to address such issues.

Findings from the case studies do however indicate that using ‘gut feel’ assessments and making assumptions about the impact of specific EEO/action can lead to further change where there is a clear line drawn between EEO/diversity action and organisational effectiveness in internal and external organisational discourses. One obvious case study example is at Manuco where a direct connection is made at many different levels of the organisational between meeting quality benchmarks and ‘looking after’ the organisation’s employees.

**Linking measurement to outcomes**

Yes well we think there are values, benefits in this. How you actually measure them over time is difficult. HR director Unico

A range of practices in linking measurement to the outcomes of EEO/diversity action were found in the case study organisations, from a more limited assessment such as at Childco to a more comprehensive assessment such as at Healthco. These different practices appear to relate to organisational size, industry location and different financial pressures on public and private sector organisations.

At Childco, for example, HR indicators such as turnover, absenteeism and employee satisfaction are used to monitor progress. However the connection made between positive changes in these indicators and specific EEO/diversity action, such as ECR, is impressionistic:
I mean I see the results of it. They've been working... lots of them are working part-time, and it seems to be working because all of the registered nurses have been here quite a long time which would indicate that they're satisfied with what they're doing. HR manager Childco

In relation to sick leave, the connection between ECR and the decreased use of sick leave by registered nurses is unclear:

There was an improvement there... I suppose you could link it to our rostering, but you know, there was nothing... I couldn't definitely say, ‘Well, you know, because we rostered this way, this is what's happened’. Nurse unit manager Childco

Other organisations carried out ongoing monitoring of specific EEO/diversity action, which led to some improvements to the initiative. At Finco for example, there has been ongoing evaluation of the job-share initiative since its inception—mainly in relation to take-up by staff—in terms of gender, classification level and location. Two years ago there was a comprehensive survey of staff involved in job-sharing. Survey respondents indicated that many staff would have resigned had job-share not been available and that most of their managers and colleagues viewed the arrangement favourably. The survey findings showed that there had been a small increase in the numbers of managers involved in job-share partnerships. The job-share survey also indicated that this initiative remains overwhelmingly used by women concentrated in base grade clerical and customer service classifications. Job-share take-up also remains concentrated in the state where Finco’s head office is located.

According to the senior manager with responsibility for EEO/diversity, this survey data together with anecdotal feedback from various Finco business units suggested that awareness of job-share was not as good as it might be throughout the organisation. In response, a job-share register was set up and internal publicity about this flexible work arrangement (disseminated via internal communication channels) was increased. However despite such small scale improvements, the number of staff job-sharing has remained static for some time. This is viewed by the managers involved as positive given downsizing at the bank in recent years, but more critically by the relevant union organiser who argues that in an organisation the size of Finco, the uptake could be expected to be a lot higher.

Few case study organisations undertook an integrated assessment of the impact of EEO/action and its contribution to organisational effectiveness. Healthco uses a range of different quantitative and qualitative measures (as noted above) to both assess the outcomes of specific EEO/diversity action and its overall impact on the health of the organisation. For example analysing the impact of ECR and work/life benefits such as PPL, Healthco identified a number of direct and related outcomes:

- positions easier to fill as hospitals are now targeting a wider percentage of the population
- an increasing number of staff returning following maternity/parental (return to work rate now 95 percent)
- 82 percent of staff having changed their hours to accommodate new family commitments
- school hours contact provision enabling many senior management staff to manage their family responsibilities and to continue with their careers
- high morale among staff as demonstrated by low levels of turnover and absenteeism
Drivers & Contexts of EEO/Diversity Action

- a very high retention of new nursing graduates
- positive feedback from staff on flexible work practices
- a lack of industrial conflict, positive feedback from relevant unions and their promotion of Healthco in the marketplace.

What is important is whether the assessment of outcomes leads to further change. For example, at Busico the use of more sophisticated HR software enables a gender analysis of partners, senior managers, promotions, new hires and turnover as well as rates of return after PPL. This allows the organisation to monitor a number of key EEO/diversity indicators. It has also led the organisation to examine the relative pay of men and women employed in senior positions within the company. At both Healthco and Manuco, on the basis of outcomes to date there has been an extension of the quantum of PPL and PML leave and some reduction in service periods required to access it.

How success is described

The overall success of specific EEO/diversity action may be measured across a range of internal and external indicators that relate to the broad performance measures and targets outlined above. In several case studies, it was the external recognition and the contribution an EEO/diversity initiative was seen to make to an organisation’s reputation and stature—both within the industry and the broader community—that was cited as a major indicator of success.

At Finco for example, a measure of success for the job-share scheme is that it is seen, according to a senior HR manager, as ‘a natural thing not a company-dictated thing’. Both management and union suggest that the considerable publicity for the job-share scheme is a mark of success because it influences the perception of Finco in the marketplace:

*I think one of the issues of sustainability here is that it's much better for an organisation to have others talk about it, than it is talking about it yourself.* Senior executive Finco

They've certainly done research into whether job-share is working and delivering for them. But I really believe that they would see, at the highest level, [that] the main value to them as being the PR honestly; that they can say they've got it, and that they can keep getting recognised as being a good employer you know, and now they have ‘Employer of Choice’ on their ads. Union organiser

Busico benchmarked itself against what other companies in its industry were doing and came out well, particularly with its relative proportion of female partners. That Busico was named among the top employers in three annual Hewitt surveys was seen to indicate that the company’s broad EEO/diversity culture was embedded in the organisation and visible both internally and externally. Several female senior managers spoke of the importance of reputation and stature and that in particular Busico is seen as a family-friendly flexible workplace that is supportive of women. This has led to Busico itself providing a best practice benchmark in the broader industry:

*One other outcome, and an interesting one, has been that we've been approached by a number of other organisations to talk about this program. So we've had approaches from at least two that I've been aware of, from major legal firms coming along to speak to us about...*
what we've done and how we've done it and what we've learned and what we do differently.
Partner Busico

At Socialco, the hallmark of the success of its remuneration packaging and its PML is ‘having quality staff who stay for a long time’. At Healthco the hallmark of the success of EEO/diversity action such as ECR and PPL is external feedback from prospective staff. This is seen to confirm the organisation’s leading edge profile in the industry, with staff becoming ambassadors for the organisation:

The word is out there that [Healthco] are looking for more staff, and the word is out there that it's a good place to work, and it's always pleasing at interviews when you find out, ‘Well, how did you find out about it?’ and they say, ‘Oh, by word of mouth’ because that's probably the most powerful thing that we hear that it's a nice place to work, we hear that ‘you're supportive’, we hear that ‘you're pretty flexible’, we hear that ‘you've got a good training and development department’, and that's good... HR director Healthco

Management accountability for success of initiatives

One of the issues we explored within the case study organisations was management accountability for the achievement of specific EEO/diversity goals. In some case studies the accountability, particularly of line management, for specific EEO/diversity action was clear, in other organisations it was less so. In most organisations, managers are typically assessed on meeting short-term business or financial goals as well as on overall performance, but rarely on the way in which they implement specific EEO/diversity action.

The EOWA suggests that diversity management should be linked to the assessment of management performance. This rarely took place in any formal sense in the case study organisations, although a number of interviewees recognised the importance of doing this. For example at Busico there is recognition that such a link is vital:

So basically [it] gets down to; ‘...here's your personal plan of the year, you as a partner in Corporate Finance; on [the Women’s Program], what are you going to achieve this year’. I think until people are measurable against those objectives and therefore held accountable and therefore it'll affect their remuneration, I think that's the level that probably, ideally, that's the level it should get to. Partner Busico

The direct lines of accountability at Healthco, particularly around HR issues are associated with devolved management:

We spend a lot of time with our managers stressing to them that probably the single most important thing they do is recruit... if you recruit a bad apple, it's going to affect the whole environment, so if you look at a case of apples, you've got one bad apple in the middle, it's only a matter of time before the whole lot go rotten, and if you recruit a poor performer... you know, (a) you shouldn't have recruited them in the first place, but (b) if you do, you've got to manage them, and one of the things that we've done here is we've made the managers manage it. CEO Healthco
This devolved management structure provides clear management responsibility and accountability for the implementation of specific EEO/diversity action such as ECR in particular work areas:

I was just given, ‘Hey, you just go for it’. That’s why I like it. It's been like, ‘Hey, it's all yours. Do it. Go and sort it out’ I was actually given six months and they're happy enough after six months. Catering manager Healthco

**Outcomes of action**

Most interviewees reported positive outcomes from specific EEO/diversity action for both employees and for the organisations in which they work. Even where there was limited evaluation and monitoring, some tangible business benefits were associated with taking EEO/diversity action in most organisations, from decreases in absenteeism to increases in gender representation at senior levels. However the scope of these outcomes and the extent to which they contributed to a greater awareness and understanding of the value of gender equity within the organisation varied across the case studies.

As outlined below, the outcomes of EEO/diversity action can be viewed from a number of perspectives, including the targets of such action, their co-workers and managers as well as from an organisational perspective and the extent to which such outcomes meet broader organisational goals.

**The view of employees targeted**

In each case study organisation interviews were undertaken with the targets of EEO/diversity action. In some organisations this involved a range of workers, in others it was limited to one or two exemplars. The specific groups of workers on which specific EEO/diversity action focused took a more immediate view of the outcomes of such action. Where such action involved improved work and family benefits for example, many of those interviewed were positive about being able to access such measures, typically seeing both benefits for themselves and their employer.

I get to spend time with my child, that's my daughter. That's the main [benefit], that's what I really wanted. I couldn't stay home full time and I don't think I could work full time at the moment and fortunately that's it. [The advantages for Finco are]… they still get a person… well I've been in [Finco] 12 years and [Mary], I think, has been here 15 years, so we've got a lot of knowledge. So instead of having one of us just half time or not having us at all, they've still got us here. Job-sharer, Finco

[PML] didn’t affect my decision to become pregnant… I was just more or less wanted to make sure that I had my position when I got back but not so much the paid leave, but it was a bonus, yep... It's not that I can't return full time, but I don't want to. I just want to be able to spend time with my baby as well. So I did ask when I went on leave whether I was able to come back part-time or not because if they had said, ‘No’, I was prepared to just quit because I wanted to stay and spend some time at home. So when HR actually said, ‘Oh, yeah, you can work part-time when you come back’, I thought, ‘Well, this is fantastic, you know. It's great!’ Engineer Manuco
One of the major issues with work/family arrangements is that practical access is limited to those in typically female lower level positions and/or that employees who access such arrangements are marginalised. However in several case study organisations there are signs that take-up of work/family benefits is becoming more mainstream. For example at Finco, job-sharing has begun to be slowly taken up by both professional employees and managers, although take-up by men remains relatively rare. At Healthco various work/family benefits have been accessed by a wide range of employees, including the use of PPL by men and working school contact hours by senior female managers:

*As much as I would like to work part-time: not in this role. I'm motivated by anything the hospital can do for me. I recognise the role is not suited to part-time or my personality in terms of performing the role, it's not suited... So when I discussed my arrangement with [the CEO], he made the comment that it wasn't fair to have [people] working, being paid part-time, when people are simply delivering full time work...so school contact hours and working from home is an acceptable alternative.* HR director Healthco

Several of those interviewed who access ‘family-friendly’ work arrangements raised the ‘trade-offs’ they made in making use of such arrangements. Such trade-offs included limited career development, having to drop a classification level, being limited to certain types of work and fears of a negative impact on performance reviews. While most accepted such limitations as a price they were prepared to pay for increased flexibility, a number of part-time managers raised concerns about having to work more days/hours than they were paid for and meeting performance expectations centred on a full-time position.

Work/family arrangements, apart from PML, were typically subject to management discretion. The exercise of such discretion is dependent to a large extent on the prevailing organisational culture. Where it is assumed that employees will request flexible work arrangements and where managers are encouraged to meet these requests, such discretion is usually exercised in the employees’ favour. However in a number of organisations, interviewees reported inconsistency in the use of management discretion. For example, one senior manager had phased in her return to work after her first child by working part-time hours and from home. A change in the manager to whom she reports means that she will not be able to access similar arrangements after the birth of her second child:

*This time I'll still phase back, but you know, I've already had the strong message that working from home will not be considered necessarily a good thing this time... And that's got nothing to do with the experience that we had working from home... it worked really well but I now have a new... there's a new person in the role and his view is that ‘Oh, it's always better to work in the office’.*

Specific EEO/diversity action directed to increase skill attraction and retention was generally viewed positively by those who benefited from initiatives such as ECR:

*I wouldn't look somewhere else for work... I love my job here, and this self rostering works really, really well, but because it's not acute care either, and I'm getting older, and so nursing homes aren't appealing to me.* Registered nurse Childco

*Well I'm separated, divorced, and have a child, so I have set days that I have access to my daughter, and they are my priority days, so I work just around those. I mean that's actually changing at the moment because we're going to court, and I've discussed it with my*
manager... I mean we tried to work out what were the best days for me to have off, when I actually put in my child days. So it was worked with the ward and what would be the best... I'm a senior specialist... and it's preferred that I work later in the week when we tend to have an increased surgical load, so I can direct junior staff, just oversee more complicated surgery... that's when work prefers that they have access to me, so we then base my selected days off on the earlier part of the week... if they can show flexibility... you've [got] a responsive employee... I mean I've come in and done other shifts when they have been short or someone's running sick, and you know, short roster requirements and they've been rung in the morning and you might come in in the afternoon. They have been most accommodating in meeting my requirements.

Male senior nurse Healthco

Where the focus of specific EEO/diversity action was improved gender representation and culture, most case study organisations were able to report some increases in the proportion of women managers, in numbers of female applicants for management positions and in the average length of service of female staff. Where executive level or partner level women were joined by other women, several of those interviewed reported the welcome experience of being more ‘in the mainstream’ and of having increased influence and support in taking up particular EEO/diversity action. However from the perspective of individual women who are the targets of initiatives to support and ‘grow’ senior women, there is also a view that women have to be proactive. For example one senior woman talked about her own experience of promotion:

To be honest, if I hadn't said anything, it wouldn't have happened... in terms of my experience, everything that's changed in my area, I've had to drive including my own promotion. There would certainly [have] been the expectation that I would simply have taken on additional responsibility and lived with it.

In several organisations, senior women reported that perceptions of the normative worker as male still present a cultural barrier to the acceptance of the presence of senior women, with several talking about their perception that women still have to work ‘twice as hard as men’:

I do see it now a little bit with some of my fellows in the group that even if I am outperforming them with male bosses and male CEOs and all of that, there is still some reason [they are] seen as more committed and I don't know why.

The view of co-workers/managers

Where possible, interviews were also undertaken with co-workers who were not specifically targeted by the particular EEO/diversity action being researched. Managers outside HR roles such as those in operational and financial roles were also interviewed. In several cases the line managers of those targeted were interviewed as well. These perspectives are important because they provide some indication of both the level of awareness of specific action within an organisation and perceptions about the goals and outcomes of EEO/diversity action.

Feedback from co-workers and managers at Manuco for example highlights the breadth of EEO/diversity outcomes at that company, which are not limited to those targeted by specific action. This feedback also reflects a high level of awareness of the aims of specific EEO/diversity action, which in turn reflects the consistency and transparency with which an EEO/diversity culture is promoted:
One of the incentives [in PML] is that they don't feel victimised because they're having a family and to go without money and stuff... I think it was to boost morale... I wouldn't say that was the only thing that contributed to it, but it was an accumulation of a lot of the points. Process worker Manico

In other case studies, co-workers may see themselves as not gaining any benefits from action targeted to others. This may be due to a lack of promotion within the organisation of the employee- and organisation-wide benefits of such action. At Unico for example, co-workers interviewed were proud of the increased stature and reputation of their employer that had resulted from the considerable external publicity about increased PML provision. At the same time, such publicity gave a lopsided impression of a range of other initiatives introduced with PML as part of a package of employee benefits. For example knowledge about decreased service requirements for long service leave, foster parent leave, child-rearing leave and purchased leave which targeted a far wider group of employees than PML, was uneven among co-workers interviewed. In some case this had led to resentment of those who were seen to benefit from increased PML. This points to the need to regularly and consistently communicate both the aims of specific EEO/diversity action and the outcomes of such action across the organisation.

In other cases where access to the benefits of EEO/diversity action—such as part-time work and job-share—were negotiated on a case by case basis, such action was seen by some co-workers and managers as of relevance only to the individuals concerned rather than the broader workforce. At Finco for example, while job-share arrangements are viewed by senior management as ‘one of many options available to the accountable team leader to deploy and access the capability they need’, in practice take-up of those arrangements depends on the initiative of individual employees. The view of several managers was that the success of job-sharing arrangements is due to the particular individuals involved; they were reluctant to see it as a broader option. Indeed, despite the fact that there are now several managers job-sharing at Finco, and that these cases have been publicised both externally and internally, job-share is still seen as very difficult to implement for managerial and certain professional jobs:

There's too much continuity [required] and one-off things all the time [in management]. So I don't really think it would be possible unless it was sort of just one particular area of it rather than just the overall. As the job gets [more] responsible, the logistics of job-sharing get trickier to work out. Manager of job-share partners Finco

Likewise, while part-time work may be introduced as part of an EEO/diversity action around work/family or work/life, difficulties with its practical implementation was seen to limit its outcomes:

From a business sense, it is difficult to accommodate that because you've got head count restrictions and payroll restrictions and all these types of things that don't necessarily encourage employers to offer part-time roles. It means that they've got more employees on their books and you know, everything goes up as a result of that and all the rest of it. So there's no real encouragement there for part-time work really. Manager Carco
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Impact on the organisation

In all the case study organisations, including those case studies where action was relatively recent, the specific EEO/diversity action researched was generally seen to be successful. In most case study organisations, as highlighted above, success is measured in an approximate way and it was not always possible to identify if such perceptions were organisation-wide or limited to management. However interviewees identified a range of ways such action assisted meeting broad organisational goals. These outcomes included:

- enhanced reputation and stature
- increased retention, stability and organisational commitment
- improved patient/client service and improved production targets
- contributing to broad cultural change in the organisation.

A positive impact of EEO/diversity action on the public image of the company was reported in a number of case studies. While most of the case study organisations have been recognised by the EOWA and/or national work/family awards for such action, in a number of cases the enhancement of reputation and stature went beyond the EEO/diversity ‘industry’. At Carco for example, even though the increased quantum of PML had been in place for a relatively short time, the publicity the company received when it announced this initiative was identified as contributing to an enhanced reputation for the company within the broader community. Indeed the comment was made by two interviewees that the publicity for this particular action within the industry and the media had outstripped that which followed major product launches.

Improved retention, attraction, stability and organisational commitment were also frequently cited organisational impacts of EEO/diversity action, even where they were not measured or quantified. For example at Childco, ECR is seen to deliver a more stable registered nursing workforce, with appropriate skills, making it easier to respond to the complex needs of the families who use the service. At Socialco, the remuneration packaging proved very effective in attracting and retaining middle level program managers. (However over time and with the limited budget for staff wage increases, the organisation is again finding it difficult to match the wages such managers would get in government agencies.)

Improved patient/client service and meeting of production targets were reported by a number of organisations. At Manuco for instance, EEO/diversity action, which is part of the overall people approach to HR management at that company, was seen to contribute in a tangible way to world best practice delivery in quality manufacturing. The company’s record of three defects per million outstrips not only comparable Australian operations, but also other operations of the multinational company:

We don't have a lot of robotics and automation... we rely on the skills and commitment of our people to do it. So it's those things all wrapped together. I mean it's hard to really explain it, but I guess a large part is gut feel that this is the right way to go, and it's demonstrated in that... when I started here, we had reject rates to our customers of around about 20 parts per million, which is quite low but it's still 20 parts for every million we supply. We haven't changed the manufacturing processes at all. But what we have done is we've invested in our people and currently our reject rates are about three parts per million, and three parts per
million is world's best... even benchmarked against our... 80 other [Manuco] companies. No-one has achieved that level of quality. CEO Manuco

The connection between identifying improvements in workplace culture as a goal of specific EEO/diversity action and perceived outcomes is strong in a number of the case study organisations. For example, at Carco where organisational culture change is in its early stages, the increased number of women on the company board is seen as critical by the CEO to ensure that the organisation becomes more inclusive and representative of women. He also sees it as vital to driving the necessary cultural change through the organisation. In some cases it was the process of negotiating specific EEO/diversity action that was seen to contribute to an enhanced workplace culture. For example, at Unico where earlier enterprise bargaining negotiations had a negative effect on relations between staff and management, the ‘listening’ process in the subsequent round, which led ultimately to the increase in PML and child rearing leave, was seen to lay the foundations for a more harmonious workplace culture.

Case study interviewees were less likely to point to changes in the gender culture as outcomes of EEO/diversity action. This relates at least in part to the ‘invisibility’ of gender equity in the EEO/diversity agenda, both in public and organisational discourses, as discussed in Chapter 1.

**Taking Further EEO/diversity action**

So far we have identified the drivers and contexts, the implementation and the outcomes of specific EEO/diversity action researched in nine ‘best practice’ case study organisations. This section focuses on the extent to which taking EEO/diversity action led case study organisations to take further EEO/diversity action.

A number of factors appeared to lead to further EEO/diversity action within the case study organisations. The range of internal and external contexts canvassed in Chapter 1 are very important—particularly organisational culture and personal leadership commitment—in providing the climate for further EEO/diversity action. These contexts change, and reflect the perceived internal and external responses to previous EEO/diversity action.

As highlighted above, measuring progress is also important, particularly where such measurement allows for a close tracking of what has been achieved. Where positive feedback was received about particular EEO/diversity action, organisations appeared more likely to take further action, even if such evaluation was impressionistic. For example, as noted earlier, a number of case study organisations had recently increased the quantum of the PML available to eligible employees. Interestingly, in most of the case study organisations, the prospect of a national paid maternity leave scheme was seen as something to build on rather than to substitute for company-initiated action:

…because it's just been such a success and really just works now, and you know, [the CEO] wants to have better than industry standards so... whatever the government scheme comes up, we'll just supplement that, and he wants 14 weeks paid maternity leave in the next EBA. HR director Manuco

Internal support for and external publicity about EEO/diversity action to date has worked to encourage plans to build on these initiatives. Manuco has now set a number of clear performance targets including the gender representation of women in management,
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engineering and in internal promotions. The aim is that women will make up 50 percent of managers (currently 25 percent), 30 percent of engineers (currently 14 percent) and 80 percent of internal promotions (currently 60 percent).

I'd like to offer more opportunities for young women in the workplace to move into manufacturing. So I'd like to do some work with the universities and in training women in manufacturing and business. I'd like to offer more opportunities for young parents, young mothers to be able to find a way to work in our industry... I'd like to do things like that, and there's ways we can do it. I'd like to offer more flexibility, more part-time work and more flexible work arrangements. CEO Manuco

At Healthco PPL has recently increased from six to eight weeks, partly in response to the positive external recognition of the initial action to introduce PPL:

We felt that we had set the standard in the marketplace and we got that because we preferred to look at things and constantly explore things and so on, and I guess you know, for me with even more challenge after winning that award because I felt, 'OK, now that we've done that, we have to keep going'. HR director Healthco

In this way the success of previous EEO/diversity action can work to provide a pressure for further action. At Buisco, the perceived success of the senior women’s program in increasing the representation of women in the partnership and in senior management provided both internal and external momentum for further EEO/diversity action in the launch and repositioning of the revamped program:

I think it's been very dependent upon, like a certain level of passion or motivation by individuals and without that you wouldn't have it keep going... it wouldn't have kept going or being reinvented in a way that it has. I think it's been critical to have people who have been prepared to drive it... I think also once the firm got a certain level of recognition in the marketplace then that placed a certain obligation on the firm to keep going as well. Partner Buisco

In a number of case study organisations the view was expressed that where previous EEO/diversity action had secured increased representation of women in senior roles, this challenging of the traditionally male decision-making culture made further EEO/diversity action more likely:

I think with having four females in the board, this would be not a guarantee, but at least a strong force to keep that change going. CEO Carco

Within the board [women] have made a difference to the dynamics, to the climate that's created for them. HR director Carco

At Carco, the current work/life strategy was seen as a tangible outcome of the different climate which had resulted from earlier initiatives to increase the representation of women in senior management.

There was some debate as to whether change around EEO/diversity could be maintained without a buoyant business climate. While some pointed to the pressures on EEO/diversity initiatives and programs at times of business downturn, Manuco’s CEO argued that even
within a declining market, it was still possible to grow a business and that continuous improvement around EEO/diversity was one way to do it:

*It's a difficult one, you can't have one without the other. I mean I think I mentioned earlier what our key objectives were and in order to be able to deliver security of employment and to be able to deliver the benefits that come with security of employment and at the same time continuously reduce cost, I don't see that there's any way you can deliver that as an organisation unless your business can grow. You have to grow your business. I'm yet to find a business that can't be grown… You have to make it happen, and to my way of thinking, if you can get the collective ability of your entire workforce working towards making that happen, then you're going to have a lot more success than if you've got them pinned against the wall feeling as though they don't want to be part of it at all and looking for the next job down the road. CEO Manuco*

Interviewees in other case study organisations also characterised ongoing EEO/diversity action as part of a long-term process rather than a series of discrete actions:

*It's incremental and it is having champions. I mean one of the reasons [the women’s program] has been renamed ... you need to reinvigorate this every so often. It's like anything, you start it up and then it starts to lose power and you've got to keep going. This is a long-term deal, you will not fix this in a year you know, people's careers over a period of time. So you need that discipline to say, ‘Where do you want to end up on this?’ We're still working out that vision of where we want to end up and [are] driving towards that. CEO Busico*

…*my view of change is you have to take a long-term view because if you force change, it will be resisted, and so my view is that as long as you're moving forward, it doesn't have to be my way, and as long as people are moving towards an objective, and that is an objective, then that's OK. CEO Healthco*

To maintain this forward momentum and to build on EEO/diversity action already in place, a number of case study organisations rely on both research and scanning the external environment.

*I guess probably from an HR point of view, I believe that my role is to be thinking to the next step so that it doesn't become like the wallpaper... re-engineering ... re-energising but not... I don't like the word ‘re-engineering’ cos it's got all sorts of different implications ... I guess probably it's scanning the environment for opportunity that may improve the wellness of the organisation and the staff... it's scanning the environment to say, 'Why are we different? Why would people want to come and work here?'... looking at things that other organisations aren't doing, listening to our staff in terms of what their needs are, looking at what I think their needs might be, and looking at the way society is going in terms of providing a labour force, and the demands and expectations of that particular labour force, and being able to integrate them into the workplace. HR director Healthco*

Finally, while a commitment to taking ongoing EEO/diversity action may appear relatively organic once it has developed some momentum, the experience of several of the organisations suggests that constant management and a shift in consciousness are required. At *Busico* for example, achieving increased female representation in the company decision-making depends both on the targets set out in the revamped senior women’s program and a recognition of the pervasiveness of the male-dominated organisational culture:
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There were some who said, ‘Look, you know, this should happen by natural progression, don’t worry, it will happen in time’ ... I mean you have to have some explicit programs otherwise nothing happens, but the reality is that changing culture needs to be sort of baked into the eyelids. CEO Busico

You have an Australian community, [a] business community in particular which is primarily men. It’s getting shifts in consciousness that becomes very important. It’s very subtle at the end of the day. We are talking about very subtle things that need to be changed. You know you can have all the programs in the world but it’s... assumptions which are unexamined assumptions about who is best for the job never get challenged. So that’s an example of very subtle forms of discrimination that you have to address. At the end of the day, because explicitly we don’t have it... we are absolutely equal opportunity here; but it is in the small choices about what we do often made by men day in and day out [that] almost sit in between, sit in the marrow between the bone. HR director Busico
Chapter 5 Conclusion

The introduction of the specific EEO/diversity action described in this report has been important in drawing attention to the issue of equal opportunity for women and in providing tangible benefits to those targeted by the initiatives. In several organisations, EEO/diversity is now a key element of the broader business strategy and practice. In other organisations the pursuit of EEO for women remains at the margins of the business of the organisation. In some cases this is due to the relatively recent adoption of a more embedded EEO/diversity strategy, in others it is because more strategic action around EEO/diversity has stalled.

While in most of the case study organisations there is at least some recognition that gender inequity is an organisational issue, the approach taken in several ranges from the small scale and incremental to the more integrated and embedded, with EEO/diversity action both an outcome and a driver of further organisational culture change.

Organisational contexts

In Chapter 2 we canvassed the range of internal and external contexts which may predispose organisations to take specific EEO/diversity action at a particular point in time. The organisational context shapes whether and how organisations ‘do’ specific EEO/diversity action and the impact of this action on the organisation and women who work within it.

The internal context is very influential. One important factor that is associated with taking EEO/diversity action as well as the scope, implementation and outcomes of that action is the presence of a people-focused organisational culture. In case study organisations such as Manuco and Healthco, the commitment to a people-centred organisation forms the basis for the way these organisations practice EEO/diversity. This creates the ‘space’ for focus on ‘the right thing to do’ and undertaking action to improve organisational commitment and culture. It is also linked with a commitment to sustained action around EEO/diversity. The way business is done can also directly influence the introduction of specific EEO/diversity action. For example, at Busico the emphasis on relationship-focused production led to the senior women’s program providing tangible assistance to senior women to learn how to play golf and how to host lunches for clients, so as to better equip them with skills and experience required for them to advance in the organisation.

‘Best practice’ case studies used in the promotion of EEO/diversity or work/family benefits may give the impression that it is only organisations that are financially successful or in a growth phase that can ‘afford’ to consider such action (see EEONA 2003). However experiences in some of the case study organisations show that EEO/diversity action can be used to drive business success; and also that business success, measured in profit levels and business turnover, does not necessarily ensure that there are resources directed to undertaking further and more extensive EEO/diversity action. The particular business pressures on an organisation may place constraint on the extent and type of EEO/diversity action taken.
However business pressures can also provide opportunities for action—as we saw in the case of Healthco, which used ECR and other flexible work options both to attract nursing staff and to effectively manage individual hospital units within ever tightening financial constraints. Indeed as we saw in Chapter 4, Manuco’s CEO argued that continuous improvement around EEO/diversity was the way to ensure a productive business while meeting increasing price pressures.

An unexpected finding from the research, given the focus of the EOWW Act with which all the case study organisations are obliged to comply, is that there was relatively little discussion of gender equity as a goal of EEO/diversity action in the case study organisations. This is in sharp contrast to recent organisational case studies undertaken through the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Olgiati and Shapiro 2002) and in the United Kingdom (Miller and Neathey 2004). In these case studies the promotion of gender equality and the advancement of women in the workplace are explicit organisational goals of EEO/diversity action similar to that researched in this project.

Does this matter? In many ways the silences around gender equality within organisations reflect the displacement of EEO for women from the political and policy agenda, in favour of an emphasis on ‘work/family’ and a discourse of women as ‘mothers’. The apparent gender-neutrality of much of the specific EEO/diversity action taken within the case study organisations also reflects the adoption of a ‘managing diversity’ discourse. Such silences about gender equity may be strategic (Sinclair 2003). The shift in focus from EEO to diversity and gender neutrality may well represent a way to ‘soften’ action taken to address women’s employment issues and may also provide a catalyst for further action (Olgiati and Shapiro 2003, p32). We see this reflected in the various iterations of Busico’s senior women’s program. This evolved from an explicitly women’s program, to a program in which men were invited to participate, and then to a new program with a more gender neutral program title that nevertheless is aimed at progressing women in senior management and which establishes specific targets against which this progress is to be measured.

One of the disadvantages of the managing diversity discourse is that it can be ‘gender-blind’. In this situation the aim and effect of diversity action is more likely to focus on providing individual access to EEO than on organisational cultures that advantage men. This is illustrated in case study organisations where part-time work and other flexible work options have been introduced as part of specific EEO/diversity action within a work-family agenda. In a number of instances the provision of these benefits were unsupported by any changes in work organisation or in normative expectations structured around the ideal male worker, who works (often more than) full time, unencumbered by domestic responsibilities (Williams 2000). Moreover, unlike in similar European studies, the lack of a clear focus on gender equality or even on EEO for women meant case study interviewees were less likely to point to changes in the gender culture or a greater awareness of the importance of equality (see Olgiati and Shapiro 2002, pp. 81-82) as outcomes of EEO/diversity action.

The external contexts in which organisations operate also influence the nature, extent and timing of EEO/diversity action taken. This is seen in particular in the climate created by the community and political debate around paid maternity leave, which directly influenced the decision to increase the quantum of PML in three of the case study organisations. Requirements for legislative compliance also provide an important influence, such as at Funco where the reporting requirements of the EOWW Act provided both the framework for, and an important springboard to, EEO/diversity action. While the effect of EEO and anti-
discrimination legislation may appear to have waned—particularly with the legislative and policy move away from regulation, both in the area of EEO and industrial relations—the broad legislative framework still provides important parameters within which EEO/diversity action was taken. A focus on legal liability is also used within organisations, particularly in HR, to persuade those unconvinced of the merits of implementing particular EEO/diversity action.

**Beyond the business case**

In recent years, debate about EEO for women has been heavily focused on what is described as the ‘business case’ for adopting such strategies, and on benchmarking as a key strategy driver. In other words, the focus has been on showing how the adoption of EEO/diversity action (such as PML) can leave the organisation financially better off than otherwise (see for example Halliday 1994; Kramar 1996; EOWA 2004). The Affirmative Action Agency and its successor, the EOWA, have also stressed the business benefits of EEO/diversity action (EOWA 2003).

So how effective has the business case been in driving change around EEO/diversity? The findings from this case study research suggest that that the business case rationale is not the sole or even the main driver of EEO/diversity action. Different drivers interrelated in diverse ways for the specific EEO/diversity action researched in the nine case study organisations. These findings are consistent with both UK and Australian survey data that suggests that there are a range of drivers to EEO/diversity action, other than the business case, which include a social justice case, legal pressures, political pressure and personal leadership commitment (Rutherford and Ollereanshaw 2002, p. 7; EEONA 2003).

Where the business case provided pressure for an organisation to take specific EEO/diversity action, it was used typically as a broader business argument for attraction and or retention of skilled staff in a tight labour market (such as at Healthco) or to attract and retain a younger age cohort of staff (such as at Unico).

The business case was more frequently used as a persuader to secure internal agreement to a specific proposal for EEO/diversity action; or as a post-facto legitimiser to justify, both externally and internally, the decision taken. For example, whatever the actual drivers to a specific action taken might be, those pushing for its introduction would in many instances use a business case to win support. The assertion of the business case driver to action was also used in applications for waiving from reporting under the EOWW Act or in best practice awards and case studies.

Given the emphasis on costs/benefits analysis in the business case, it would be expected that where it provided a pressure for specific EEO/diversity action, detailed estimates of the costs and savings might be prepared in the organisational negotiating process. However in a number of case study organisations such analysis was performed in a fairly ritualistic way. For example, assertions were made about the financial savings of improved retention of key female staff that would follow from the introduction of PML, even where retention was already high. Clear benchmarks that would facilitate monitoring of any cost benefits of specific initiatives were rarely established before or when an initiative was introduced. This suggests that a narrowly conceived business case may be largely rhetorical.
Perhaps surprisingly one of the key drivers in the introduction of much of the EEO/diversity action researched was the ‘right thing to do’. This had at least two main manifestations. The first of these, the desire to reflect community standards and/or meet community expectations, was influenced in some cases by head offices or subsidiaries located overseas, as well as by the previous experiences and personal values of the people who provided leadership around a specific initiative. In other case studies, the organisation’s central mission in respect to their client group, such as at *Unico* and *Socialco*, was extended to the treatment of employees.

A commitment to improve the gender culture in the organisation, particularly as a way of levelling the playing field for women, was both an explicit and implicit driver in a number of case study organisations. This appeared to be linked with the presence of a broader EEO/diversity strategy. The other main manifestation of ‘the right thing to do’, improving the stature and reputation of the company through exemplifying the socially responsible organisation was demonstrated in different ways. At *Carco* for example, one of the drivers to PML was the desire to position the company as a community leader and enhance the company’s reputation as a player in the development of broad national/international trade policy. At *Funco* the decision to introduce a range of EEO/diversity action was at least partly driven by wanting to improve the community profile of the organisation, which had been associated from time to time in the media with ‘problem gambling’.

Are unions still a force for change around EEO/diversity action? Over the last decade union pressure has played a key role in decisions to introduce and formalise specific EEO/diversity action, particularly in enterprise bargaining negotiations. However in several case study organisations that pressure was not present for the specific EEO/diversity action researched. While the job-share scheme at *Finco* was introduced in the process of union negotiations, in a number of organisations a desire to manage union influence and secure the trust of employees drove the timing and the extent of specific EEO/diversity action. In *Carco*, *Healthco*, *Munuco* and *Unico* this contributed to decisions by management to put forward offers of PML/PPL that well exceeded relevant industry standards. It should be noted, however, that once in place, the relevant unions used the benchmarks established in this and other EEO/diversity action in enterprise bargaining negotiations in other organisations within the respective industries.

**Negotiating and implementing action**

The case study research highlights the process of winning agreement to a proposal for EEO/diversity action within an organisation. The business case was frequently evoked; as was an assertion of minimum costs associated with a particular initiative, however imprecisely calculated. For example, in a number of organisations, the age profile of employees or its gender make up was used to reassure other organisational decision makers that PML would not be too costly and/or would be more than compensated for by the benefits that would accrue. Community expectations—particularly in the case of PML—as well as the possibility of a national PML scheme, were also evoked to both win support and to legitimise decisions taken to introduce or increase the quantum of PML/PPL.

How important is the leadership of the CEO in taking EEO/diversity action? Wellington et al (2003) argue that the role of the CEO is critical to the adoption of EEO/diversity action. Across the case study organisations experiences differed. The leadership of the CEO in an organisation such as *Socialco* was important to the introduction of specific action. However in
other organisations the CEO played a more facilitative or even a neutral role. In Busico for example, the senior women’s program continued under three different CEOs, driven by a number of key champions in the organisation at different points in time. It would appear that it is leadership around a specific action that is important, not necessarily at the CEO level, but at senior and more middle level positions in the organisation.

What hinders or limits implementation of EEO/diversity action? In the case study organisations, the extent of implementation appeared to depend on the overall approach taken. In their study of ‘equality action’ in European companies, Olgiati and Shapiro (2002, pp. 92-95) identify three main approaches to implementing such action, which provide a useful typology to highlight the different approaches taken in the nine case studies. In some instances they also reflect different stages of organisational evolution around EEO/diversity more generally (see Sinclair 1994).

- In the *one-shot approach* the focus in the implementation of EEO/diversity action is detailed and methodical, but only applied to a particular project and/or part of the organisation. This does not mean the process is poor but that there is no ongoing attempt to spread the impact of the EEO/diversity action taken throughout the organisation. For example the implementation of ECR at Childco has not been picked up in other areas of the organisation;

- In the *building blocks approach* the implementation of EEO/diversity action is through incremental steps towards medium term EEO/diversity goals. This involves ongoing monitoring of the outcomes of specific action, and gradual improvements being made on an ongoing basis. The implementation of the specific EEO/diversity action researched at Unico and Finco is typical of the building blocks approach;

- In the *continuous approach* the implementation of EEO/diversity action is continuous, sustained, coordinated and refocused as necessary over the long term. This does not necessary mean that implementation is smooth sailing. With Busico’s senior women’s program, for example, there were periods when support for the program waned (particularly in periods of organisational restructure); this meant that the program had to be repositioned within the company.

What appeared important in the more continuous approach to implementation were both the anticipation of opposition and clear, consistent and transparent communication across the organisation about the scope and goals of the specific EEO/diversity action. In organisations such as Manuco and Healthco this appeared to also secure understanding and support for EEO/diversity action more generally. In this way feedback/support from staff can work to support successful implementation and sustaining of EEO/diversity action in a network/expressive way rather than through direct pressure.

The degree of integration of business strategies and the specific EEO/diversity action, as well as the broader EEO/strategies to which they contributed, varied across the organisations, consistent with the different implementation approaches highlighted above. Those organisations that clearly identified a direct relationship between their staff and business outcomes were more likely to apply a continuous approach to implementation. To be effective, it appears as if this integration must be ‘walked’ and ‘talked’ by CEOs and senior management on a continuous basis and understood at all levels of the organisation, through grassroots consultation and providing opportunities for employee input and feedback.
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Monitoring and outcomes of action

The assumption in the EEO/diversity literature is that monitoring and evaluating the impact of specific EEO/diversity action is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, comprehensive assessment focuses attention on the impact of specific EEO/diversity action, both on employees and on the organisation. Such assessment can work to draw a link between EEO/diversity action and organisational effectiveness (see Rapaport et al 2002). Secondly, the lessons from such monitoring and evaluation can provide the impetus and platform for further action, as highlighted in Chapter 4. Indeed failure to assess EEO/diversity action means that no learning is drawn from such efforts, which limits their effectiveness and makes it difficult to decide how best to approach the issue in the future (Olgiati and Shapiro 2002, p. 73). Thirdly, openly communicating what is known about the impact of EEO/diversity action enhances the transparency of, and accountability for, the action both internally and externally. This can work to raise awareness, understanding and commitment to such action within the organisation (Olgiati and Shapiro 2002, p. 73), and also provide realistic encouragement to other organisations considering EEO/diversity action.

However across the case study organisations detailed and systematic monitoring and evaluation of specific EEO/diversity initiatives was relatively rare. Even where the business case was both a driver to action—and was evoked in the internal negotiation over the introduction of particular EEO/diversity action—specific performance measures were infrequently established. In most case study organisations some broad outcomes were nominated where EEO/diversity action was taken, often as part of the process of securing senior management agreement. While the monitoring of broad HR indicators in the case study organisations was common, there was great variation in the extent to which specific EEO/diversity action were monitored and outcomes evaluated. Further, there was little evidence of analysis of the EEO or gender equity implications of organisational policies and practices more generally—what is known in the UK and other European Union countries as ‘gender mainstreaming’. For example, consideration was rarely given to the EEO ramifications of HR indicators such as training spend.

Does the lack of detailed monitoring matter? As we note above, such monitoring can provide a way of continually assessing progress. Arguably the lack of documented assessment—as opposed to promotion—limits what can be learnt both within an organisation and by others. However, while measuring can create the impetus for ongoing and further action, the connection between such assessment and further action needs to be explicitly made and acted on. This connection can also be made through the ‘gut level’ assessment of progress. It would appear that the purposes of EEO/diversity action can be sustained quite well by the broad idea that such action is working. What also appears to be important is that the results of such monitoring, whether quantitative or qualitative, are communicated to staff so that continuous action is informed by feedback from staff. Monitoring for the sake of monitoring is not enough.

Where measurement and monitoring is discrete and separated from any assessment of the overall health and effectiveness of an organisation, it is very difficult to gauge the outcomes of specific EEO/diversity action. In other words it is not the collection of data that is important, but the way such data is used to drive ongoing progress against broad EEO/diversity goals. The collection of data for EOWA reporting for example was a useful backstop in some case study organisations; it can provide useful gender breakdowns of data and can also encourage some self-reflective practice. However where data is collected only
for reporting purposes, the separation of EEO/diversity action from ‘mainstream’ HR and business agendas can be reinforced.

It is also argued that management accountability for the achievement of specific EEO/diversity goals is associated with sustained change around gender equity (Wellington et al 2003). In many of the case study organisations where the specific EEO/diversity action, (such as part-time work and other flexible work arrangements) was seen as a benefit to be negotiated with management and subject to management discretion, line managers were rarely required to account for the take-up or success of such initiatives. However in organisations where management was devolved and accountable, such as at Manuco and Healthco, then the take-up of specific EEO/diversity action appeared to contribute to the assessment of individual managers' overall performance.

Tangible improvements both for the targets of specific EEO/diversity action and the organisation were evident in all the case study organisations. The extent and sustainability of the outcomes varied however, as highlighted in Chapter 4. What were the main reasons for success or lack of success? Did the action taken make a difference to all or some women in the organisation? What are the success factors in taking EEO/diversity action? The length of time specific action is in place is very important to, but no guarantee of, further action. Where the approach taken to the implementation of ongoing EEO/diversity action is a very slow and incremental one, the momentum can be lost, even where organisational culture is recognised as the issue. The case studies suggest that whatever the pace, a commitment to continuous internal review and external scanning of the environment, either formally or informally, is associated with more sustainable outcomes. Another important factor appears to be strong management commitment to change. Without senior management commitment and drive and close integration between EEO/diversity and HR and business, it is difficult for EEO/diversity action to become embedded.

The extent of the outcomes also appeared linked with the implementation approaches taken to such action. Olgiati and Shapiro characterise equality action outcomes in a three-level typology (2002, pp. 95-97), which is linked with the implementation approaches outlined above.

- **Limited outcomes**, which are specific to the groups of women or issues targeted by the action, typically result from more focused action and a one-shot approach to implementation. While such outcomes can directly benefit the group on which they are focused, typically there is little integration of the specific EEO/diversity action into the culture, policies and practices of the organisation. Where EEO/diversity action is not integrated with and accompanied by other EEO/diversity action, effective outcomes may also be limited. For example, while PML may be introduced to attract and retain key employees, the potential of this action to provide EEO outcomes will not be realised without other action to support the return to work of the women who access such leave.

- **Leopard spot outcomes** refer to outcomes that deliver ‘islands of equality’ across the organisation, but still leave ‘islands of inequality’ such as job segregation, unequal pay and cultures that limit gender equality. For example, while a number of case studies have taken specific EEO/diversity action across a range of areas such as improving gender representation, skill attraction/retention and work/family balance, the outcomes of such action are neither organisation-wide nor embedded in the organisation’s policies, practices and culture. A focus on EEO/diversity that is not integrated with work organisation and
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business strategies can also work to leave other issues, such as a 'long hours' culture, to undermine the effectiveness of EEO/diversity action, particularly that around work/family. Interestingly while an increased representation of women in management roles provided a profile for EEO/diversity action it did not guarantee it, a finding consistent with other Australian research (Rindfleish and Sheridan 2002).

- Across the board outcomes refer to the outcomes of more embedded EEO/diversity action across the organisation, as well as of specific EEO/diversity action taken to address particular issues as they arise. Integrated action together with a continuous improvement approach to the implementation of EEO/diversity action is linked with tangible benefits for specific groups of employees, employees as a whole and for the organisation. Manuco and Healthco exemplify such ‘across the board’ outcomes. It would appear that where strategies and action focus on cultural change that is inclusive of women, improvements in the perception of women and their place in the organisation follow. Similarly a commitment to ongoing cultural change and a continuous approach to the implementation of EEO/diversity action also appear to be associated with using the success of specific action as a springboard for further action, as highlighted in Chapter 4.

Concluding comments

This has been a wide-ranging research study with a number of implications for policy and practice. Several of these are sketched out below.

Diversity in approaches and outcomes

The case studies in these nine best practice organisations clearly show that there are very different ways of ‘doing’ EEO/diversity. The pressures for change and the ways in which they played out in specific organisations are also quite diverse. The specific EEO/diversity action researched highlights not only a variety of initiatives, but more importantly a diversity of approaches to introducing and implementing this action, within very different contexts. The way organisations have responded to their external and internal environment have in turn provided the organisational motivations or drivers to pursuing specific EEO/diversity action. Importantly, the case studies show that drivers or pressures for change can be found in all sorts of circumstances and can be mobilised for EEO purposes. They also show that it is possible to take EEO/diversity action where some of the factors assumed to be necessary preconditions to such action, such as a supportive and active CEO or extensive monitoring and measurement mechanisms, are not present.

Perhaps surprisingly, given that the case study organisations are all recognised as ‘best practice’ organisations in the area of EEO and diversity, the depth and significance of the specific action researched is very varied. Only a minority demonstrate a continuous improvement approach to the implementation of EEO/diversity action and only a minority demonstrate ‘across the board outcomes’ where such action is embedded across the organisation. In these organisations it was the presence of a people-centred organisational culture that appeared to be associated with ongoing and integrated EEO/diversity action.
**Beyond a narrow ‘business case’**

The case study findings highlight the importance of not placing too much weight on the role that narrow business case arguments play in driving EEO/diversity action. The encouragement of organisations to take on such action needs to be based on an understanding of what actually drives organisational decisions—by recognising the range and interrelatedness of different drivers that may provide pressures for change. These might range from focusing on arguments about the ‘right thing to do’, in terms of meeting broader community or societal expectations, to improving organisational commitment and cohesion.

Another way to conceptualise the diversity of drivers to EEO/diversity action and the contexts in which they provide pressures for change is to draw on a broader understanding of the ‘business case’. This is set out in the model below, where the narrow cost/benefits business case is only the tip of the iceberg. The next two layers are about both specific and general organisational effectiveness and cohesion, with the bottom two layers drawing on the wider external organisational context. A broad business case draws on all these layers and incorporates the medium- to long-term interests of the organisation and its employees within the context of the medium- to long-term interests of the economy and the community. Focusing on all of these layers opens up the potential for a number of different social, economic, industry and organisational contexts to be mobilised for EEO/diversity purposes.

**Figure 1  A broad business case for EEO/diversity action**

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**Refocusing on gender equity**

One of the advantages in acknowledging different drivers to EEO/diversity action, such as the ‘right thing to do’—either as a separate organisational/social justice case or as an integral part of a broader business case—is that it provides a means of placing gender equity squarely on
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the organisational agenda. This is important because where gender equity is not an explicit consideration in EEO/diversity action it is difficult for organisations to manage for gender-equitable conditions and outcomes.

One way to refocus on gender equity in diversity action may be to couch gender equity goals in terms of ‘equal citizenship’ based on the principles of social justice and fairness (Zetlin and Whitehouse 2003), not only within society but within organisations. One approach to inserting gender equity goals into diversity action—advocated by Lotte Bailyn and Joyce Fletcher—is the ‘dual agenda’ for gender equity and organisational effectiveness (Bailyn and Fletcher 2003; see also Rapoport et al 2002). This approach focuses on identifying the ways in which gendered work practices contribute to gender inequity and detract from effective organisational functioning; then identifying leverage points for change that will benefit both the people who are doing the work and the work itself. In particular, keeping a focus on gender equity can work to focus attention on more systemic issues (such as an organisational culture built around the norm of the ideal [male] worker, unequal pay and sex segregation) than those with which organisational EEO/diversity action has been traditionally concerned.

Gap between policy and implementation

The gap between policy and implementation around EEO/diversity that has been documented in the research literature in respect to work/family provisions (Whitehouse and Zetlin 1999; Probert et al 2000) was present at least to some extent in a number of the case study organisations. Further, leaving the achievement of EEO/diversity outcomes up to voluntary organisational initiatives means that effective EEO/diversity action is only taken up by relatively few organisations, with the majority of the women in paid employment failing to benefit from even limited action. These issues point to the need for organisational action on EEO/diversity to be supported and encouraged by external policy and regulatory action if it is to be effectively implemented or if it is to be extended beyond ‘best practice’ organisations.

There is a strong case for government working with business and unions, for example by disseminating information and providing technical advice, offering financial support, and promoting discussion of good corporate citizenship and the equal citizenship of the men and women who work within organisations. One such mechanism may be to place more emphasis in reporting under the EOWW Act on a continuous approach to EEO/diversity action focused at all levels of the organisation, which addresses horizontal as well as vertical gender segregation as well as gendered work practices. While achieving EEO and gender equity has to be worked out at the organisational level, OECD experience suggests that the enterprise approach is only effective when used within a framework of minimum standards and entitlements, such as rights to family-friendly benefits or a national paid maternity leave scheme, the public provision of services, such as child care (see OECD 2001; OECD 2002), and adequate resourcing for agencies such as the EOWA and HREOC to promote gender equitable EEO/diversity action.
References


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Appendix 1  Research methodology

Selection of case studies

Both the EOWA and the NDTT (an organisation made up of Australian firms with a commitment to managing diversity in their workforces) took a major role in securing the agreement of individual companies and organisations to participate in the research. Potential case study organisations identified were those with a high profile in the area of EEO and diversity, which had undertaken at least one major initiative. The initial group of case studies was also selected on the basis that they provided:

- a sectoral spread across industry
- a range of organisational size
- a range of organisations covered under the EOWW Act
- a gender mix of organisations
- a range of types of initiatives and strategies;
- a geographic spread.

Given the community and policy interest in paid maternity leave during the period of the research, where it existed in a case study organisation its introduction and implementation also formed part of the research.

More than 30 organisations identified as suitable for the research were contacted. Most of these companies were contacted formally by the EOWA and if agreement to take part in the research was secured, further discussion took place about the initiatives which were to be the focus of the research. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was established between each organisation and RMIT University. Each MOU set out the parameters of the research, and the roles and responsibilities of the case study organisations and the researchers in the documentation of the change processes around the particular initiative/s being researched. As part of securing the agreement of potential case study organisations, each MOU also undertook to:

- protect the anonymity of the case study organisation unless the organisation chooses to disclose its involvement in the research project;
- ensure the anonymity of interviewees and confidentiality of any interview material or secondary documentation provided by the case study organisation.

Over the period of the research, a number of companies that had originally agreed or agreed in principle to participate in the research dropped out and alternative case study organisations had to be located. Reasons for dropping out were varied and reflect the fairly volatile business environment in which many Australian companies are currently operating. Such reasons included:

- company mergers or restructures (in four cases)
- current business circumstances
- initiatives had only been in place a short time
- changes in key personnel
- a wish to no longer be involved.
Ultimately nine case studies were completed. Interviewees within case study organisations were selected by the company, after the researchers indicated the range of personnel suitable for interview. The aim was to get a range of key personnel from the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), human resources (HR) manager, equal employment opportunity/diversity manager, finance or operations manager, union delegates/officials and employee members of the group the measures were designed to benefit. In all but three of the case study organisations the CEO was interviewed.

Where the initiatives or strategies came out of union negotiations or were included in an enterprise agreement, attempts were made to interview the relevant union officials. In three of the four case studies where there was some union involvement in the particular initiative/s being researched, interviews were undertaken with relevant union officials. In the fourth case study, relevant union officials indicated an unwillingness to be involved in the research.

A total of 73 individuals were interviewed in the nine case study organisations. These included four group interviews with employees. In-depth interviews ranged from one hour to two hours. In three instances, participants took part in additional interviews. All interviewees were asked questions about the key research issues listed above, relevant to their organisational role.

The number of interviews undertaken within each organisation varied, depending on the size of the organisation and the availability of key personnel for interview. The number and duration of interviews undertaken was also limited by a concern to minimise disruption to the participating case study companies and the willingness of the particular organisations to provide access to potential interviewees. To ensure that consistent information was gathered in each case study to the greatest extent possible, one researcher conducted all the interviews. All of the interviews were recorded and later transcribed.

Case study companies were also asked to provide access to relevant internal secondary data in relation to implementation and evaluation. Such data included reports to the EOWA, internal promotional material, employee surveys, values surveys, culture inventories, key workforce indicators and other measured values and benchmarks, and internal evaluation reports. In each case study internal documentation was collected from the main informants in the organisation. In addition, publicly available data, such as that in annual reports, in EOWA publications, on the internet and in media searches were gathered.

The interview transcripts and internal and external documentation collected form the basis of the analysis in this report. Interviews with people located in various roles in and parts of each case study organisation allowed for the documentation of multiple perspectives on the contexts and drivers for the particular initiatives under discussion. Access to both internal and external data also provided a range of perspectives on organisational understandings of, and discourses around, EEO and diversity.

**Limitations of the research**

The case study methodology facilitated an in-depth understanding of EEO and diversity initiatives within organisations. However there are a number of limitations to generalising the findings more widely and to the information and views gathered in individual organisations.
Representativeness of case studies
The case studies selected and ultimately able to participate in the research are ‘high end’ organisations in the public eye, willing to take part in research that was time-consuming and intrusive. It was also originally envisaged that there would be a range of case studies with varying organisational size and gender mix and a range of governance arrangements including partnerships and boards. As noted below, the nine case studies tend to be larger female-dominated organisations, with only one case study having a partnership structure. The case studies thus do not represent typical organisations in particular industries or even the typical ‘best practice’ organisation. They do however allow an examination in some depth about how and in what circumstances organisations, widely perceived to be effective in developing EEO and/or diversity strategies, actually go about their EEO/diversity practice.

Selection of initiatives/ interviewees/ and documentation provided
Difficulties in securing the agreement of potential case study organisations limited the range of the specific initiatives examined. The initiatives originally selected for the research were ones that were in the public eye. Some organisations were, however, reluctant to have research conducted on the suggested initiative and nominated another as the focus of the research. In two instances these initiatives were not fully implemented or had not been in place for any length of time. In these cases the focus of the research was necessarily skewed to the development of the initiative/strategy rather than its implementation and outcomes.

Inevitably too, there was a variation in the extent and depth of the information we could access in each case study. Some organisations clearly chose interviewees who were likely to articulate the ‘company line’ about particular initiatives. However people are unpredictable and some of these interviewees were surprisingly frank about some of the internal struggles around the inception and the implementation of particular initiatives, while others were less so. The type and extent of internal documentation provided, particularly in respect to internal evaluation of the initiatives, also varied. Some organisations were reluctant to provide certain internal evaluation, such as internal organisational climate surveys, despite some persistence by the researchers. Despite providing access to other data, one case study company was extremely reluctant to provide an individual employment profile of the organisation.

Changes in external and internal contexts during the life of the project
Case study research does not occur in a vacuum. During 2002 and 2003, over which time the research was undertaken, there were many significant changes in the Australian business environment. Mergers, acquisitions, restructure and change of key personnel not only affected whether or not organisations were willing to participate in the research, but also changed the environment in which many of the nine case studies operated. As an example, two of the CEOs interviewed left their organisations after the completion of the case studies, with unknown repercussions for the diversity and EEO initiatives being researched. Changes in the social and political context were also influential. During the period of the research the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) conducted an inquiry and after widespread community consultation made a proposal for a national paid maternity leave scheme (HREOC 2002). In direct response to the community and policy debates that both preceded and followed this proposal, a number of case study organisations introduced and/or increased the quantum of paid maternity or parental leave, including after the case study research was completed.
Notwithstanding the qualifications outlined above, this is one of the most detailed studies undertaken to date of organisational change around affirmative action, equal employment opportunity and diversity. The caveats we have raised here do not compromise the aims of the research in illuminating the range of approaches taken to ‘actions’ designed to achieve EEO for women. The departure of CEOs, mergers and restructuring as well as changing government compliance requirements are all aspects of the dynamic context in which action around EEO and diversity takes place. Similarly, the possible limitation of relying on company-provided internal data and on company selection of interviewees is balanced by the benefits of multiple in-depth interviews with individuals in a range of organisational roles and with varied perspectives in each case study organisation.
Appendix 2   Specific EEO/diversity action

The basic details of the content of the specific EEO/diversity action researched in each case study organisation is set out below. In some instances such action is discrete and limited in scope, either to specific target groups or to specific areas of the organisation. In other cases the specific action researched is an integral part of a larger organisation-wide EEO/diversity strategy.

Busico

*Busico* is a leading professional services firm. Across Australia, the firm has more than 2000 employees, almost half of whom are female. Within the firm, women make up around one in ten of the partners, one in four of the account directors, around a third of all managers and three quarters of the support staff.

**Initiatives researched:**

*Development of senior women managers program*
- introduced: first over seven years ago, reviewed and revamped three years ago
- targets: ‘talented’ women managers
- provides: mentoring, networking, leadership and focus on work/life balance
- status: specific policy.

*Paid Parental Leave*
- introduced: eight years ago
- targets: permanent managers and staff; no formal policy for partners
- provides: 4 months for eligible managers/directors, 2 months for other eligible staff who are primary carers and 5 days for non-primary carers
- eligibility criteria: continuous service of one year at time leave is commenced
- basis: 2 months of 4 months leave paid to managers on return to work
- status: part of family-friendly/work-life policy.

*EOWA status:*
- waived two years
- Employer of Choice for Women.

Carco

*Carco* is a large vehicle manufacturing company. The company employs more than 8000 staff across its Australian operation, which is located across two states. Around one in ten of *Carco*’s employees are women. Currently women make up around one in three of the company’s executive; around one in ten of managers and administrators and less than one in ten of the production line staff.

**Initiatives researched:**

*Work/life strategy*
- introduced: launched three years ago
- provides an overarching company framework that covers areas such as:
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- flexible work and leave arrangements
- retirement planning
- health and well-being
- information resources
- provision of facilities

- current focus: retirement planning, health and well-being, supporting families, flexible work arrangements
- current target: salaried/white collar employees
- status: specific company policy.

**Increased quantum of paid maternity leave**
- introduced: three years ago
- targets: all permanent staff
- provides: 14 weeks paid maternity leave, increase on previous 6 weeks leave introduced six years ago.
- eligibility: continuous service of two years; 6 weeks available for those who have between one and two years' service
- basis: 6 weeks pay initially at full pay and the option of a further 8 weeks at full pay or 16 weeks at half pay
- status: 14 weeks leave part of policy when first introduced but now part of a union negotiated EBA.

**EOWA status:**
- waived one year
- Employer of Choice for Women

**Childco**

*Childco* is a state-based children’s health and aged care service, registered as a charitable trust. The organisation employs around 250 staff across the children’s service and a number of aged care facilities. More than three quarters of *Childco’s* employees are women. Currently women make up more than four out of five managers, around four out of five professional and para-professional staff and just over half of catering and other support staff.

**Initiatives researched:**

**Employee-choice rostering**
- introduced: four years ago
- provides: staff with opportunity to indicate preferences and availability for specific shifts before fortnightly roster drawn up
- current target: registered nurses in children’s services
- status: accepted practice.

**EOWA status:**
- waived three years
- Employer of Choice for Women.
Finco

*Finco* is a major company in the finance sector. Across Australia, the company has more than 20,000 employees, almost two thirds of whom are female. Within the company, women make up just over one in ten of the senior executives, almost one in five of senior management, a quarter of all management and more than four fifths of clerical, sales and administrative employees. There are two women out of 12 on the company board.

**Initiatives researched:**

*Job-share scheme*
- introduced: over a decade ago
- targets: all permanent staff; initially focused on retail branch network but now includes operational roles and some supervisory/management roles
- provides: working reduced hours/alternative to working part-time, job-share register since 1997 to match prospective job-share partners
- basis: initiated by employee/s; needs agreement between job-share partners and line & responsible managers as to how a full-time position will be worked
- status: part of flexible work/life policies, referred to in enterprise agreement.

*Paid maternity leave*
- introduced: over a decade ago
- targets: all permanent staff, including executive level staff
- provides: 12 weeks for eligible staff
- eligibility criteria: continuous service of one year
- basis: paid as salary
- status: in enterprise award and part of flexible work/life policies.

*EOWA status:*
- waived two years
- Employer of Choice for Women.

Funco

*Funco* is a state-based company in the cultural and recreational services industry with some operations in other states. In the head office state women make up well over two thirds of the company’s total employment, which is spread over a number of sites in the state. Women comprise around a third of permanent staff and around four fifths of casual staff. Currently women make up around one in ten of the executive staff; around two in ten of senior managers and around four out of five administrative staff.

**Initiatives researched:**

*EEO Action Plan*
- introduced: formally six years ago
- provides: framework for EEO action and reporting to EOWA and includes:
  - mentoring
  - management development/training opportunities
  - work family initiatives including PML, part-time work after birth/adoptive of child up to child’s second birthday, stay in touch program, carer’s room, parents’ network, full-time equivalent employer superannuation contributions when return part-time
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- current target: permanent staff/women
- status: specific company policy.

**Paid maternity leave**
- introduced: four years ago
- targets: all permanent staff
- provides: 6 weeks paid maternity leave at base rate of pay prior to going on leave
- eligibility: continuous service of two years, including primary carer in case of adoption
- basis: 3 weeks pay on commencement of leave; remaining three weeks paid two months after return to work.
- status: company policy.

**EOWA status:**
- waived two years
- Employer of Choice for Women.

**Healthco**

*Healthco* is a state-based acute care private teaching hospital, part of an Australia-wide health services company. Women make up around four fifths of *Healthco*’s 800 employees. Currently women make up around two out of three executive and senior managers, around nine out of ten registered nurses, around eight out of ten administrative staff and around two out of three support service staff.

**Initiatives researched:**

**Employee choice rostering**
- introduced: formally four years ago
- provides: full-time and part-time staff with opportunity to indicate preferences and availability on regular or short-term basis for specific shifts of varying length before ward/department roster drawn up.
- current target: registered nurses, patient care assistants, catering staff
- basis: negotiated with unit managers. Staff who are ‘continuous’ shift workers, available to work across shifts, rather than having regular days off are paid an extra week’s pro-rata annual leave
- status: in EBA
- part of a range of other flexible working initiatives including PPL, part-time work, purchased leave scheme and working from home.

**Paid parental leave**
- introduced: four years ago (increase to quantum two year ago)
- targets: all permanent staff who are primary carers
- provides: 2 weeks up to 6 weeks leave (now 6 weeks leave); can be paid half pay for double the period (increased to 8 weeks one year ago)
- eligibility: All permanent staff with continuous service of:
  - 12 months service—two weeks PPL
  - 2-3 years—three weeks PPL
  - 3–4 years—four weeks PPL
  - 4–5 years—five weeks PPL
  - 5+ years—six weeks PPL
(Changes introduced one year ago provide for 6 weeks PPL if less than three years service and 8 weeks if more)

- basis: PPL calculated on base rate of pay, excludes all penalties and allowances. PPL can be taken on half pay for double the period. Amount of PPL paid upfront when employee goes on leave
- status: EBA.

**EOWA status:**
- waived two years.

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**Manuco**

*Manuco* is the Australian-based operation of a multinational automotive parts manufacturer. Manuco employs around 600 permanent staff, of whom around three quarters are women. The company also employs a significant number of casual staff through a separate labour hire firm. Currently women make up around one in four of senior management; around two in ten of management staff, and around nine out of ten production line staff.

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**Initiatives researched:**

**Flexible work arrangements**

- introduced: formally four years ago in EBA
- provides: a number of work/family benefits including:
  - access to part-time work on a case by case basis
  - all sick leave entitlements can be accessed as carer’s leave
- current target: all eligible staff who work at *Manuco*
- status: in EBA; also extended to non-award employees and also casuals employed at *Manuco* by labour hire firm
- integrated with a range of other initiatives including PML, carer’s room, income protection, early finish on Fridays, emergency leave without pay as well as training and development initiatives for production line staff.

**Paid maternity leave**

- introduced: four years ago
- targets: all permanent staff
- provides: 6 weeks leave (quantum now 14 weeks in most recent EBA)
- eligibility: all permanent staff with one year's continuous service (eligibility for increased quantum is 14 weeks for those with three years or more continuous service and 10 weeks for those with between one and three years of service)
- basis: 3 weeks before go on leave and 3 weeks on return. Staff required to complete one day unpaid training/induction before return to work (Basis for increased quantum of 14 weeks leave is 10 weeks on commencing leave and 4 weeks on return; for 10 weeks leave is 7 weeks on commencing leave and 3 weeks on return)
- status: EBA, but also extended to non-award employees.

**EOWA status:**

- waived two years
- Employer of Choice for Women.
Socialco

*Socialco* is a family welfare charitable organisation, located in two states. It employs around 350 staff, of whom around one third are casual. Women make up around four fifths of *Socialco*’s employees. Currently women make up four out of five senior managers, around nine out of ten managers, and around seven out of ten direct service employees.

**Initiatives researched:**

*Remuneration packaging*
- introduced: three years ago
- provides: mechanism for salary sacrificing a significant percentage of wages to increase take-home pay and benefits for mainly female staff including cars, a ‘*Socialco*’ card to pay for petrol and other shopping, and loan payments
- target: all staff, although middle level management get most benefit because of additional career steps inserted into pay and classification structure
- basis: based on pay and classification structure. Tied to gross salary paid, with sliding scale of amount which can be salary sacrificed
- status: in certified agreement.

*Paid maternity leave and paid partner’s leave*
- introduced: PML eight years ago. Paid partners leave introduced three years ago
- targets: permanent staff
- provides: 9 weeks PML and 2 weeks paid partner’s leave after birth or adoption of child
- eligibility: 9 months service plus the length of the pregnancy for a birth or eighteen months in the case of adoption. Second or subsequent confinements must be preceded by 12 months continuous service.
- basis: PML and paid partner’s leave paid upfront. PML can be taken as part of 18 months total maternity leave, partner’s leave can be taken as part of 12 months unpaid parental leave
- status: in certified agreement
- integrated with a range of other flexible arrangements including access to unpaid leave in school holidays; breastfeeding room, payment for childcare costs when required to work overnight; ability to bring children to work when arrangements break down.

*EOWA status:*
- waived three years.

Unico

*Unico* is an Australia-wide tertiary institution, with five campuses. Women make up almost two thirds of the more than 2000 permanent employees. Another 1500 employees are casual. Women make up one in three of senior academic and administrative positions, almost four out of five base level academic positions and more than two out of three administrative staff positions.

**Initiatives researched:**

*Increased paid maternity leave*
- introduced: three years ago (increase on previous 12 weeks leave)
- targets: all eligible female staff who give birth to or adopt child/ren
• provides: up to one year's PML
• eligibility: a minimum length of continuous service before maternity leave due to commence
• basis: there are three levels of entitlement:
  o one week for every month of service for those with less than one year's service
  o 12 weeks full pay as a lump sum or fortnightly pay for those with one to two years' service
  o one year’s leave paid as 3 months on full pay (paid as lump sum or fortnightly pay) and remaining 9 months on 60 percent of pay
• other conditions:
  o those taking one year’s PML must enter a written agreement with Unico to return to work for 26 weeks following PML or adoption leave. If they do not they must repay all paid leave that is in excess of 12 weeks PML
  o annual leave and long service leave will accrue during PML or adoption leave
  o incremental progression will be deferred following return from paid parental leave of 6 months or more
• status: in EBA.

Child rearing leave
• introduced: three years ago
• provides: unpaid leave for care of preschool age children
• eligibility: staff who have been on maternity, adoption, paternity or foster care leave
• basis: 12 months leave made available after maternity, adoption, paternity or foster care leave. Staff may request additional leave an annual basis up to 4 years provided the child does not reach school age
• conditions: child rearing leave available on basis staff agree in writing to becoming unattached from their substantive position. If on return to work their own or an equivalent position to that held prior to going on child rearing leave is not available, they can be returned to a position which is nearest in status and remuneration to their previous substantive position
• status: in EBA.

Both initiatives were introduced as part of a broader package which includes: paid paternity leave of 3 weeks; foster parent leave of up to 6 weeks on half pay; and a purchased leave scheme.
Work