

# Women on Boards Strategy 2015-2020

Annual Report 2020

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## Introduction

On 1 July 2015, the Tasmanian Government released the 'Women on Boards Strategy 2015-2020: A Five-Year Plan' (the Strategy). The Strategy outlined five strategies and associated actions for increasing women's participation on Government boards and committees, including:

1. Gender equity targets;
2. Identifying women for board appointments;
3. Using contemporary communication tools to promote board vacancies and maintain information about women seeking board membership;
4. Developing relationships with representatives, sector bodies, and key stakeholders; and
5. Supporting mentoring, training and networking for women.

The Strategy concluded on 30 June 2020 and this Annual Report provides data and information outlining the Tasmanian Government's progress over the 2019-20 financial year against each of the five strategies. Data in this Report has been

collected from all agencies by the Department of Communities Tasmania (Communities Tasmania) as at 30 June 2020.

## Progress in 2019-20

### Gender equity targets

Since the Strategy was released, women's representation on Government boards and committees has increased significantly. As at 30 June 2020, women held 46.4 per cent of positions on Government boards and committees (421 out of 907 positions). This is an increase of 12.6 per cent since June 2015, when women held 33.8 per cent of positions.

To support the achievement of the 50 per cent gender equity target, the Tasmanian Government has released the 'Women on Boards Strategy 2020-2025' (the new Strategy). The new Strategy builds and expands upon the successes of this Strategy, with a refreshed set of actions to increase women's participation on Government boards and committees.

Table 2 on page 6 shows the percentage of board positions held across State Government agencies and independent statutory boards of agencies since the introduction of the Strategy. It should be noted that the percentage figures of women on boards and committees fluctuates month-by-month in response to changing board appointments.

As at 30 June 2020, women held 33.3 per cent of Chairperson positions (37 out of 111 positions) and 53.8 per cent of Deputy Chair positions (7 out of 13 positions). Women also held 50.4 per cent of remunerated positions (284 out of 564 positions). Of the 907 positions on Government boards and committees, 46 women and 48 men held two or more appointments.

Cabinet is briefed on the Government's progress towards the gender equity targets on a quarterly basis. In addition, the 'Cabinet process for board appointments (gender equity) guidelines' were updated in 2018 and support the consideration of women for board appointments. The Guidelines require that the appointing agency complete a Tasmanian Women's Register Appointment Certification Form for all appointments and re-appointments considered by Cabinet, which describes the measures taken to identify women for appointments.

### Identifying women for board appointments

In 2020, Communities Tasmania undertook a review of the Tasmanian Women's Register (the Register) and moved the Database to a new marketing software platform to enhance functionality. The Register now routinely promotes board and committee vacancies to all women who have subscribed, which provides increased exposure of women to a wide variety of vacancies.

The Tasmanian Women's Register is used regularly as a source of potential candidates for board appointments. As at 30 June 2020, 557 women were subscribed to the Register, an increase of 30 women since 2019. In 2019-20, 35 vacancies were advertised to subscribers, which is likely to grow significantly in 2020-21, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on slowing recruitment to board vacancies in the first half of 2020.

Over the five years of the Strategy, use of the Register has encouraged agencies to take more steps to identify women for board appointments. In recognition of this, the new Strategy contains a range of actions to continue to expand and promote the Register, including expanding vacancies advertised to include boards and committees of organisations which receive core



funding from Government and promoting the Register to women's groups and networks.

The Department of Treasury and Finance's 'Guidelines for Tasmanian Government Businesses' require that Government businesses comply with the Strategy and complete a Tasmanian Women's Register Certification Form where a proposed appointment creates or continues a significant gender imbalance. The recruitment process for Government Business Enterprises and State-Owned Companies also requires the use of an approved executive search agent to identify nominations for appointment to vacancies.

## Using contemporary communication tools

The Women in Tasmania website and Facebook page were utilised in 2019-20 to promote different opportunities for women and girls, including leadership and training opportunities. A number of current and ongoing board and committee vacancies have also been advertised on the Communities Tasmania website. However, the Register remains the primary method for advertising Government board and committee vacancies to women in Tasmania.

As highlighted in the *Women on Boards Strategy 2020-2025*, the COVID-19 pandemic has prompted new ways of working, including the use of videoconferencing to attend board meetings. Since COVID-19, 84 per cent of respondents to a survey of 121 women sitting on Government boards and committees indicated that they had been given the option of attending meetings via videoconferencing or telephone, or both. The new Strategy includes an action to encourage flexible approaches to meeting arrangements after COVID-19 to support the full participation of women.

## Developing relationships

Over the life of the Strategy, Communities Tasmania has liaised extensively with officers in Government agencies who manage board administration and membership to promote the gender equity targets, including providing advice on advertising vacancies and using the Register. In 2019-20, Communities Tasmania collected data from agencies on a monthly basis, to monitor their progress towards achieving the gender equity targets and provide timely advice to Cabinet.

In 2019, the Tasmanian Women's Strategy Interdepartmental Committee (IDC) was established, which includes senior level representatives from all Government agencies. The purpose of the IDC is to ensure a co-ordinated interagency approach to implementing and monitoring actions under the Strategy and the 'Tasmanian Women's Strategy 2018-2021' (the Women's Strategy). The IDC and an associated Working Group provided extensive advice to assist in the development of the new Strategy.

While Government agencies continue to promote board vacancies to relevant professional and industry organisations on an ad hoc basis, the new Strategy includes actions to promote the Register and information on Government boards and committees to peak industry groups and women's networks.

## Supporting mentoring, training and networking

As part of the release of the Strategy in 2015, the Tasmanian Government committed \$150 000 over three years for scholarships to allow women to undertake leadership and governance training

with the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD). The 2019-20 State Budget allocated a further \$200 000 of funding over four years for scholarships to support women in leadership under the Women Strategy, including through attending AICD courses.

In 2019, the Scholarship Program focussed on women working in sectors where women are traditionally under-represented, including forestry, agriculture, farming, fisheries, mining, and building and construction. A total of six scholarships were awarded for women to attend

the AICD's Company Directors Course, as well as a year's membership to the AICD.

In March 2019, Heads of Agencies released the 'Gender Diversity Action Plan March 2019 – June 2020'. The commitment to "identify and promote opportunities for women to gain broader experience in leadership and management roles", included an opportunity for agencies to support women considering board appointments. The new Strategy will continue to support female State Servants to take up board and committee positions, with a specific focus on women who are based regionally.

**Table 1: Percentage of board positions held by women across Tasmanian Government agencies between April 2015 and 30 June 2020<sup>1</sup>**

Department	No. of boards June 2020	% positions held by women June 2015	% positions held by women June 2020
Brand Tasmania	1	N/A	64
Communities Tasmania	5	N/A	52
Education	6	56	65
Health	6	39	58
Justice	30	41	52
Office of the Ombudsman	1	N/A	33
Police, Fire and Emergency Management	3	19	23
Premier and Cabinet	2	57	44
Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment	32	21	40
State Growth	22	28	42
TAFE Tasmania	1	33	67
Tourism Tasmania	1	43	57
Treasury and Finance	5	32	38

<sup>1</sup> Includes membership of Government Business Enterprises and State-Owned Companies. Since 2015, the total number of government boards and committees, and the responsible agency for each board and committee, have changed.



**Table 2: Number of Directors on Government Business Enterprises and State-Owned Companies by gender**

<b>Board</b>	<b>Female Directors 2015</b>	<b>Male Directors 2015</b>	<b>Female Directors 2020</b>	<b>Male Directors 2020</b>
Aurora Energy Pty Ltd	3	1	4	1
Hydro-Electric Corporation Board	2	3	2	4
Metro Tasmania Pty Ltd	1	4	3	2
Motor Accidents Insurance Board	2	3	2	3
Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority	4	3	2	4
Public Trustee Board	3	2	3	2
Sustainable Timber Tasmania	2	4	4	2
Tasmanian Irrigation Pty Ltd	1	4	1	4
Tasmanian Networks Pty Ltd	2	4	3	3
Tasmanian Ports Corporation Pty Ltd	1	4	3	2
Tasmanian Public Finance Corporation	2	3	2	2
Tasmanian Railways Pty Ltd	2	3	2	3
Tasracing Pty Ltd	1	4	2	5
TT-Line Company Pty Ltd	2	5	3	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Percentage of female Directors</b>	<b>37</b>		<b>47</b>	

**Table 2: Status of actions under the ‘Women on Boards Strategy 2015-2020’**

Action	Status
<b>STRATEGY 1 - Gender Equity Targets</b>	
1a) Gender equity targets	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>The ‘Women on Boards Strategy 2020-2025’ contains a refreshed set of actions to increase women’s participation on Government boards and committees, to continue the significant progress made to attain 50 per cent representation of women on Tasmanian Government boards and committees target by July 2022.</p> <p>All new appointments and re-appointments to Government boards and committees, including to new boards and committees, are required to consider the targets and consult with the Tasmanian Women’s Register during the recruitment process.</p>
1b) Cabinet Process for Board Appointments	Complete.
<b>STRATEGY 2 - Identifying women for board appointments</b>	
2a) Strengthening and promoting the Tasmanian Women’s Register	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Government agencies are required by the ‘Cabinet Handbook’ and ‘Cabinet process for board appointments (gender equity) guidelines’ to consult with the Register at an early stage when seeking nominations for board and committee appointments.</p> <p>Under the ‘Women on Boards Strategy 2020-2025’, actions will be undertaken to expand and promote the Register, including promoting the Register to women working in non-traditional professions and industries and where board vacancies are promoted online.</p>
2b) Online promotion of board vacancies	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>A number of agencies promote upcoming board vacancies on their websites and through social media (including sites that target women), with work ongoing to extend this across other areas of Government,</p>
2c) Appointments to Government Business Enterprises and State-Owned Companies	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>The recruitment process requires the Department of Treasury and Finance to use an approved executive search agent to identify nominations for appointment to vacancies.</p>
<b>STRATEGY 3 - Contemporary communication tools are used to promote board vacancies and maintain information about women seeking board membership</b>	
3a) Social media platforms	Complete.
3b) Women’s website	Ongoing.



	<p>In 2020-21, board vacancies will be promoted predominately through the Register and the Department of Communities' website will be updated to ensure that women can quickly and easily subscribe.</p> <p>Boards will continue to be encouraged to access flexible meeting arrangements in the 'Women on Boards Strategy 2020-2025'.</p>
<p><b>STRATEGY 4 - Relationships with representatives, sector bodies, and key stakeholders are developed</b></p>	
4a) Closer ties with sector and representative bodies	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Building on preliminary work undertaken under the first Strategy, the 'Women on Boards Strategy 2020-2025' includes an action to create a Women on Tasmanian Boards network, which will include holding key networking events in the North and South of Tasmania.</p>
<p><b>STRATEGY 5 - Mentoring, training and networking for women is supported</b></p>	
5a) Australian Institute of Company Directors	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Further funding of \$200 000 over four years for Women in Leadership Scholarships has been provided in the 2019-20 State Budget.</p>
5b) Networking events	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>See 4a) above.</p>
5c) Use existing events to promote the Government's policy of gender equity on boards	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>The Strategy's gender equity policy and other women's policy achievements have been highlighted in speeches by the current and former Minister for Women and will continue to be promoted over the next five years of the 'Women on Boards Strategy 2020-2025'.</p>
5d) Support women in the State Service to take up Board memberships	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>The 'Women on Boards Strategy 2020-2025' includes an action to run information sessions for regionally based State Servants on taking up board and committee positions.</p>
5e) Promoting women in leadership	<p>Complete.</p>



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