

Submission to the Public Inquiry into the Automotive Industry

Women in Adult and Vocational Education (WAVE) asks that the employment of women and girls be considered in the review of the Automotive Industry.

WAVE is an NGO, the only national organisation with a focus on women and post compulsory education and training. WAVE represents the interests of women and girls in the broad areas of adult, vocational and work-related education and training, and the links between these, employment outcomes and labour market positions. WAVE is a member of economicSecurity4Women (eS4W), one of the Australian Government's National Women's Alliances; collaborates with Adult Learning Australia (ALA), and is a voting member of Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult education (ASPBAE). WAVE's research and consultation for the last decade and a half highlights the need for updating, resourcing and implementation and evaluation of specific policies for women and girls in vocational and work related education and training, along with improved employment outcomes.

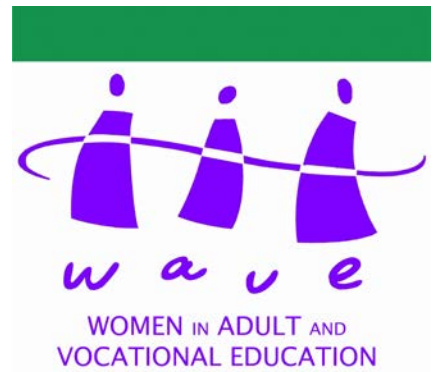
I can't think of any occupation women can't do!

WAVE would like to draw the Inquiry's attention to the report and papers on the WAVE website (<http://www.wave.org.au/>) from the research undertaken in 2011, entitled "*I can't think of any occupation women can't do!*" – Career Pathways for Women and Girls: Emergent and Non-traditional Occupations and Industries (Viable Work)'.

This research highlights a number of industry areas where women and girls are under-represented. If we look at apprenticeship and traineeships, NCVER data shows that from 1995 to 2011 the proportion of women commencing an apprenticeship or traineeship in the technical and trade occupations has remained a steady 15%, with a similar proportion completing. The women are almost wholly concentrated in the lower-paid trades of hairdressing and food. This contrasts sharply with approximately 55% of women making up the commencements in the non-trade occupations.

Gender breakdown in Automotive Training Packages and NVEAC data

The NCVER data on Training Packages broken down by gender, shows that in the Automotive Industry Retail, Service and Repair (AUR) Training Package, there were 1617 female enrolments in 2008 increasing to 1726 in 2012. This compared to 41,618 male enrolments in 2012. In this same Training Package there were 55 female apprentices in training in 2009, but only 7 in 2013, compared to 556 males in 2013. Apprentice and trainee commencements for the 12 months ending 31 March 2013



were 882 compared to 12, 685 males. The completions for females for the 12 months ending 31 March 2013 were 401 compared to 6,770 males. In other words, almost half the apprentices and trainees cancelled or withdrew, and with a very small base for females to start with, that is a very high number.

In the Automotive Industry Manufacturing (AUM) Training Package, there were 93 females enrolled in 2008 and down to 17 in 2012, compared to 675 males in 2012. There were only 7 females in training in 2013, compared to 556 males. The apprentice and trainee commencements for the 12 months ending 31 March 2013 were 3 compared to 212 males. The completions for females for the 12 months ending 31 March 2013 were 3 compared to 127 males. Once again a very small number of females were undertaking training in this area.

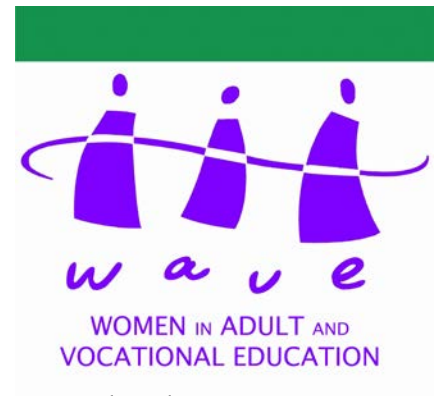
The recent report released by the National VET Equity Advisory Council 'National Report on Social Equity in VET 2013', www.nveac.natese.gov.au, uses the 2012 ABS data to show that 72% of males and 59% of females participate in the workforce. The report also notes that although a higher proportion of women (64%) than men (60%) were enrolled in a course CIII or above, many of the fields in which women were studying tended to be associated with lower rates of pay. Enrolments for women were in management and commerce, and in the service sectors. In apprenticeships, women were most under-represented in the industry skills areas of Manufacturing, Construction and Property Services.

This report quotes the 2009 WAVE research entitled *Women and VET: Strategies for Gender Inclusive VET Reform* which stated that while the number of women and girls studying in VET continues to increase, this training does not necessarily lead to equitable outcomes for many women. This research reports on the links between women's long-term economic security and outcomes from VET. It identifies the pathways offered by VET to unemployed and underemployed Australians, the up-skilling or career progression provided for existing workers, and that targeted women's programs within VET lead to increased individual agency, well-being and overall levels of community capacity.

Why encourage women and girls into the automotive industry?

From research undertaken in a variety of areas, the increased employment of women and girls in what has generally been considered to be male dominated industries, makes good sense. The Women NSW Occasional Paper 2013, *Women in Trades*, notes that "for industry, it can create a dynamic new workforce that will bring different and improved ways of working".

This paper goes on to say that in 2011 there were only 931 female motor mechanics in a total technician and trades workforce of nearly 1.43 million people across Australia. This is a very small number and as we have seen from the NCVET data, such



numbers have changed little over the years. With changes being proposed to the industry generally in Australia, it certainly presents an opportunity to put in place a statement and strategies to address this imbalance.

We refer also to comment by OECD Employment Outlook 2012 in relation to Australia that although our economy compares well with other major developed countries, under employment continues as a major issue, with implications for ‘long-term consequences for career progression, earnings potential and retirement income’. Significantly, the Report comments further that:

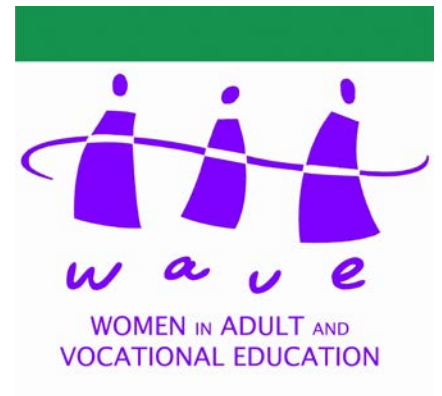
(t)his is of particular concern as the majority of Australia’s underemployed workers are women, who already suffer from lower earnings and retirement income than men. This is even more critical in the skills shortage areas within the Automotive industry.

However it is not just a matter of encouraging women and girls to enter the Automotive industry but to support them to remain in the industry. The Women in NSW paper gives four areas that need to be addressed:

- * workforce supply issues that encourage girls to enter the trade
- * workplace demand issues that change the perceptions of some employers about employing women and girls
- * the culture of work and learning including structured support and a means to deal with harassment and isolation
- * institutional practices which include rigid and family unfriendly work hours, pay and historic award and union barriers

WAVE is aware that there have been networks established for women and girls within the Automotive industry, although not all appear active. It is essential for the industry to support these initiatives and to look at strategies to encourage more women and girls into these trades, and strategies to encourage them to stay.

For further information, please contact Linda Simon, National Convenor WAVE, on 0411 550 439 or linda@wave.org.au



References

Women NSW, 'Women in trades: the missing 48 percent', Sydney 2013.

www.women.nsw.gov.au

National VET Equity Advisory Council 'National Report on Social Equity in VET 2013', www.nveac.natese.gov.au

NCVER VET Students by Industry 2013, www.ncver.edu.au/resources

¹ OECD, 2012, *OECD Employment Outlook 2012. How does Australia compare?*
http://www.oecd.org/employment/employmentpoliciesanddata/Australia_final.pdf