

Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee*the council of Australia's university presidents*

(A.C.N. 008 502 930 – A.B.N. 53 008 502 930)

AVCC Policy Statement on Gender Equity in Australian Universities

The Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee (AVCC) recognises that the achievement of greater gender equity within Australian universities is a significant issue both for the quality and strength of Australian higher education. Through this Australia will advance its national standing and domestic prosperity.

Australian universities are leading organisations in promoting gender equity through:

- equal opportunity and affirmative action policies with respect to their employees;
- efforts to provide an educational environment which practices equity in all its forms and promotes the academic and personal development of women students across all fields and at all levels of study;
- contributing leadership to the broader community debate that has led to changed expectations for women and the creation of equal opportunity legislation in Australia.

The pattern of women's participation as students has changed to such an extent that they are well represented at all levels and across all fields of study with the exception of Engineering and some areas of Science such as Computing Science.

However these efforts have not yet achieved gender equity for staff to the extent or at the rate expected. In particular research provides evidence of the continuing pattern of disadvantage characterising women's employment in universities. And the extent of cultural change required to achieve gender equity, including changes to values and expectations, has been slow.

The AVCC acknowledges the importance of achieving more rapid and thorough change towards greater gender equity in order for the sector to harness effectively the inherent strength arising from its diversity.

Recognising the need for sector wide responses to remove the cultural and structural barriers impeding this outcome, the AVCC remains committed to implementing a national plan to secure greater gender equity within universities by:

- exerting its own leadership to promote the achievements of gender equity in Australia;
- developing sectoral strategies based on research for overcoming barriers to gender equity for university staff;
- refining the AVCC and university staff development services to target gender equity more effectively; and
- encouraging each university to undertake its own actions targeted to institutionally specific priorities.

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