

# Women network in project management

Women in Project Management is a focal group for women which has a good grasp of the challenges females face in the traditionally male sector.

The number of women in project management varies considerably from state to state, but Australia's national average of 16.3% is well ahead of the 9.5% global figure. Tasmania leads with 25.3% while WA trails at 7.9%, with SA a respectable 15.5%.

Seniority figures are broadly similar. The Australian Institute of Project Management of which WIPM is a part, has three levels of Professional Competency Standards for Project Management, Certified Practising Project Director the most senior certification. Of national members 13% with a CPPD are female and the percentage of CPPM and CPPP are 18.1% and 25.2% females respectively (16.4% do not have any certification).

"There is no doubt Project Management is a challenging profession, but this is true regardless of gender," says Lisa Twyford, MD of consultancy, Clear Decisions.

"I've been a member of AIPM for a number of years. Last year I joined the SA Chapter Council and commenced looking after Women in Project Management.

"The main reason I joined was to promote project management as a profession and to give a little bit of something back to the community that has encouraged my career path and progression. Project Management as a skill set has enabled me to work on some amazing projects – opportunities that would not have been made available to me without being a member of AIPM."

Project Management emerged from a construction/engineering environment typically made up of men. As the profession has grown and been taken up by other industries – for example IT – more women have entered.

"Statistically, the representation of women in the profession is low," Lisa says. "However, there is a greater proportion of women members in AIPM in the younger age bracket, indicating the beginnings of change, and to some extent we see the typical issues of glass ceiling (vertical gender segregation), sticky floors (no career movement), glass walls (horizontal occupational segregation) and trap doors (ability to affect relations between the sexes and women's ability to gain and use that power).

"Attitudinal and behavioural challenges do exist for women; it is obviously easier in some project environments if you are a man.

"However, these challenges are decreasing. The profession is changing. Women's membership numbers in AIPM are increasing and AIPM recognises women's contribution by supporting the special interest group 'Women in Project Management'.

"We are seeing an increase in gender representation as the role of the Project Manager has evolved from a purely technical set of skills. It is now a blend of right/left brain thinking and technical skills/relationship skills and also the profession appeals to a wider group of people (not just women).

"In addition, the profession is driven by excellence as a result experience and skills, delivering on a promise, selection based upon merit are more important than gender.

The goals of Women in Project Management are to:

- Increase the profile of women in project management
- Foster an awareness of women in project management
- Encourage women to enter the field of project management
- Invite WIPM to speak to an audience where they have like-minded people with similar issues
- Provide a forum for equity and parity of women project managers
- Be aware of gender issues related to women within PM positions

Primary initiatives in South Australia include:

- Skill development sessions and forums opportunities
- A session held every quarter in 2010 and 2011
- Working with other Women's Business and Professional Organisations

For details of WIPM activity visit the AIPM page for SA or email: [ltwyford@cleardecisions.com.au](mailto:ltwyford@cleardecisions.com.au).



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