

# Appendix L

## Chapter 5: The ADF Workforce Structure: Opportunities, Pathways and Barriers – Section 5.4 Mentoring, networking and sponsorship

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### Formal and informal programs

Mentoring relationships can take a number of different forms. For example, senior leaders can engage in one-to-one mentoring relationships with women. Group mentoring activities may be used to create a welcoming environment, encouraging open discussion and dispelling some of the myths of organisational politics.

Formal mentoring programs are sanctioned by the organisation and generally involve the matching of participants. Aspects of the program are often pre-set, such as the duration of the program or frequency and location. Generally formal mentoring programs also have goals set at the beginning of a mentoring relationship.<sup>124</sup>

Informal mentoring, on the other hand, is where mentor and protégé are 'selected' by mutual choice and attraction, the terms of the relationship are as the parties choose and the goals may evolve over time.<sup>125</sup> Ideally, however, formal mentoring programs can provide a platform for informal mentoring to develop.

Formal mentorship programs can be useful where there is a gap in the quality of informal mentoring received by men and women. Important considerations to take into account are:

- whether the mentoring relationship is established informally or as part of a formal program
- who are the mentors and protégés
- how they are matched
- what support they are provided through the process.

Networking opportunities can come about through a range of forums to bring women into contact with those who have 'made it work' (for example, by successfully negotiating flexible work arrangements, or providing leadership examples). In an organisation with the geographical spread of the ADF, there appears to have been some success with establishing regional networks with specific aims (such as leadership) to assist women in particular areas of their development. Networking may also be enhanced through online technology.

Some studies of companies suggest that participation in mainstream, rather than women-only, networks is more beneficial for women, noting that 'cross-company and cross-gender programs have characteristics that are likely to combat the advantages of men over women'.<sup>126</sup>

However, although many issues relevant to professional development or career decisions are gender-neutral, some are gender-specific or impact disproportionately on women. These include issues such as inflexible career paths and planning children, perceptions of discrimination or sexual harassment, and the representation of women at senior leadership levels to provide positive role models, all of which have been raised as concerns for women in the Review's focus groups.

Other research identifies some challenges to holistic mentoring relationships between senior men and junior women, such as participants' comfort in discussing gender-specific issues, as well as their experience or knowledge in dealing such issues. A lack of mentoring training may exacerbate the ability to overcome such barriers.

In moving from traditional mentorship to sponsorship, the Male Champions of Change report provides a case study of a formal sponsorship program being rolled out by Goldman Sachs that holds senior executives responsible for the success of specific women.<sup>127</sup> The program was developed in the context of acknowledgement by leaders that promotion rates of senior women were lagging behind their male counterparts, partly due to the perception that they had a lower profile and fewer advocates from outside their business.

With a view to increasing promotion rates from executive director to managing director level, women at executive director level were assigned two managing director sponsors. These sponsors provided coaching focused on the person's impact on the organisation and their profile and reputation both within the organisation and with external clients. Feedback was also sought from sponsors regarding the candidates' responsiveness to feedback and suitability for promotion.

The program was found to help 'close the gap' in terms of the contribution of these women and their broader recognition and visibility within the organisation.<sup>128</sup>

### **E-mentoring**

E-mentoring programs are increasingly being considered as a new and effective approach to mentoring by providing a process for participants to communicate in confidence or share information within an online community. Online communication can avoid some of the traditional difficulties in face-to-face mentoring, such as power differences or geographical barriers.<sup>129</sup>

Some of the more unique benefits for women reported include:

- development of ICT skills
- networking experiences on a wider scale than would normally be possible
- flexibility of communication methods allowed mentoring to occur without mentoring interfering with family or other commitments.<sup>130</sup>

Each Service has some e-mentoring initiatives in place, however, effective e-mentoring requires an accessible online interface and familiarity with online communication.<sup>131</sup> In some situations, such as certain types of deployment or submarines, such access may be limited. E-mentoring is therefore most effective where it is one of several types of support.<sup>132</sup>

The US Navy piloted a formalised women's e-mentoring process (managed by an external provider) which matched characteristics of mentors and mentees and utilising email, electronic chat software or Skype.

This program of electronic mentoring was set up in recognition of the importance of mentoring for young women, as a tool for supporting women in their careers and advising them on options, and to deal with the difficulties of members being geographically dispersed on deployment.<sup>133</sup>

### **Mentoring, networking and other support frameworks in the ADF**

The CDF Action Plan calls for a variety of mentoring, networking and coaching models to be made available within Defence to assist with providing insights into organisational strategies, policies, programs and politics. It suggests that these programs could be conducted internally or facilitated with the assistance of external organisations and must recognise the differing needs of individuals at different life and career stages.

The Action Plan emphasises that these programs should account for, and emphasise, the value of people with different needs, rather than focusing only on women. Suggested initiatives include developing non-traditional models of mentoring, utilising social networking technologies, developing an intranet site and a 'Young Female Leaders Network'.

In response to the Action Plan, each Service has put programs in place. Significant programs include:

- The Navy Leadership Development Program and Navy Women's Mentoring Program funded through the Navy Women's Strategic Adviser
- The Army Women's Networking Forum and Regional Women's Networking and Mentoring Sessions
- The Air Force Gender Diversity Strategy and Leadership Exchange Program.

A summary of some of these initiatives follows below.

### **Navy**

Navy has established a Navy Women's Leadership Program, and Navy Women's Mentoring Program, with participation of both Navy and APS personnel. The Leadership program will provide for more than one hundred female leaders to participate in a number of women's leadership development programs and events around Australia.<sup>134</sup>

The Navy Leadership Development Program includes skills based mentoring workshops which are presented on promotion courses for all ranks.

There is also a voluntary executive coaching program, for senior sailors and officers in key positions or who have completed Navy's three day leadership workshops which are made available to all such personnel over a rolling three year program.

In conjunction with the Navy Leadership Development Program, the Navy Women's Strategic Adviser funds the Navy Women's Mentoring Program known as the Emberin 'My Mentor Challenging Women to Make it Happen' program.<sup>135</sup> In 2010, 50 positions were funded. In 2011, this was increased to 70 positions.

'My Mentor' is a self-paced, self development program covering 12 modules associated with professional and personal development. The Navy Women's Strategic Adviser coordinates the program across Navy during a specific period of time, and encourages women in the same locality to form peer support groups. Defence reported that feedback from 2010 was very supportive of the program.<sup>136</sup>

## **Army**

The primary initiative conducted by the Army is the Army Women's Networking Forum, run by Army Career Management. The Forum takes place in eight locations around Australia each year, allowing participants to hear from subject matter experts on policy developments, and new initiatives affecting Army women.

Previous forum topics have included work-life balance, childcare, breaks in service, establishing organisational presence. More recently, the forum has discussed include integration of the new Physical Employment Standards, Women in Combat Roles and flexible work. The forum also holds workgroups for discussion of set issues with the outcome reported back to the Chief of Army.

Army reports that participants have responded positively to the Forum, indicating that it 'provides them with a valuable learning opportunity and a platform to allow them to have their concerns heard'.<sup>137</sup>

Career Management Army has also introduced an online forum to complement this, providing appraisal and previews from previous mentoring and networking seminars held across Australia, and information on supporting initiatives such as the Self-Paced Mentoring Program and the Chief Executive Women's Talent Development Program.<sup>138</sup> Senior leaders are encouraged to be involved in the forum.

The Chief Executive Women's Talent Development Program involves selection of four Army women leaders at Major/Lieutenant Colonel rank to participate in a 9 month mentoring and coaching program. The program facilitates interaction with corporate executives, idea sharing and strategy formulation.

This program has been running for six years and has become very popular, attracting many nominations for acceptance into the program.

## **Air Force**

In the first phase of its 'Gender Diversity Strategy', RAAF focused on leadership, mentoring education and development. In 2011, the following programs were offered:

- A Development Grant sponsored amount by DGPERS-AF for members of any rank to undertake a course that they identify will directly contribute to Air Force's gender diversity or a development course of their choice (for women only)
- 'My Mentor: Mastering Gender Leadership' package for male leaders who manage flexible employment in the workplace or are involved in career development or mentoring of female staff. This course was available by distance in 2011 and targeted male managers/supervisors (all ranks)
- 'My Mentor: Challenging Women to make it happen' package for junior female members covering topics such as gender difference, negotiation, leadership, communication and career planning
- A one day Women in Leadership workshop aimed to provide practical steps and skills for leading in a male dominated environment (for female members who manage or supervise personnel)

- Women and Leadership Australia Employer Program for female members (all ranks) involving at the Australian Women's Leadership Symposium (two day conference) and on-site development workshop supported by an individual coaching session
- 'Leadership Journey for Women', a 10-month structured program for senior women involving three workshops, peer learning opportunities and a workshop for mentors (trial at RAAF Williamtown)
- 'Women's Village' providing online articles, discussions and polls on women's issues, personal development, career and learning, health, finance, relationships, home and lifestyle, parenting, and making a difference.

Despite a large expression of interest initially to the Air Force 'My Mentor' program (which had been successfully adopted by Navy) an interim evaluation found the response to it was not positive.<sup>139</sup> Women felt that the program was too corporate and that it did not provide opportunities to meet women locally and network in the local area.

Participants were encouraged, through the senior group member in each location, to develop local networking opportunities throughout the program, however, the response to this was limited. Engagement from participants began slowly and proved difficult to draw out thoughts and discussion on topics. Little changed with the smaller group facilitation and results varied between groups.

A key problem was that participants found it difficult to fit the pace of the My Mentor program modules in with other work and family commitments. A RAAF briefing notes that the 'relevance and topic content, while generally interesting and beneficial, may not justify the program cost, given those outcomes could be achieved through other, more tailored means of professional development'. The conclusion was that other methods of facilitation of mentoring and networking required investigation, including a formalised local networking arrangement on each base for participants to get greater engagement.<sup>140</sup>

Instead, RAAF have developed a customised program called Women's Integrated Networking Groups ('WINGS'), with a launch in April 2012. This program comprises a 10-month, locally delivered program for Air Force women, involving a two hour facilitated session once per month.<sup>141</sup>

The program is based on the premise that mentoring relationships will form 'naturally' if women are provided the right opportunities and that the most enduring relationships are those that came about through people connecting through work or social forums, rather than through 'artificially enforced mentoring programs'. The program is targeted towards creating networking, mentoring and learning opportunities for women in their local areas, particularly those working in male-dominated fields who have little access to women in their daily work.

Following success with a trial at RAAF Williamtown, it is being rolled out across major bases in 2012. Facilitators in each location have been identified (primarily interested RAAF Reserves senior women at airman or officer rank), selected and a facilitators' guide developed (with a prospect of future training). There is funding for guest speakers selected by the group/facilitator and meetings will include formal presentation, informal networking and 'facilitated feedback and discussion'.

RAAF advised the ultimate aim is 'that WINGs becomes an embedded part of AF life, and that women posted to a new base will automatically seek out and join the local chapter'.<sup>142</sup>

The program is intended to facilitate the building of support networks for women in under-represented groups who have fewer opportunities for regular networking or mentoring through everyday workplace interacts, sporting or other groups or clubs and other forums. In particular, while women in job groups which are highly-feminised may already have strong networks with like-minded women, those in non-traditional employment groups may have less training and workplace opportunities to share their experiences with other women.

RAAF report that feedback from the trial has shown that networking has assisted participants with issues such as child-friendly GPs in the local area, child care, and other issues experienced by women who are new to a community area.

While the trial and initial roll out is focused on women, it is intended that similar programs for networking and support be rolled out for other under-represented workforce groups such as indigenous members, single parents, working dads and gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgendered members.

Air Force also approved funding under the Gender Diversity Strategy for participation in the Chief Executive Women Talent Development Program. Air Force is also seeking to nominate a candidate for the 'WLA Advanced Leadership Program' involving coaching and 360 degree feedback focused on development of senior women managers. The funding secured for these programs is aimed at addressing a perceived gap between the focus of women's development at junior-middle rank level in Air Force and the lack of dedicated women's leadership development courses for senior women.<sup>143</sup>

