

Women and Firefighting Australasia

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President





PROMOTING AND CELEBRATING
WOMEN IN FIREFIGHTING

Women and Firefighting Australasia Inc.

In 2005 the first ever forum for female firefighters was held in Sydney and was organised by Dr Marilyn Childs for the organisation then known as WIFF (Women in Fire Fighting). A further conference was held in 2006 and as a result WAFA was incorporated in November 2007. Since 2010 WAFA has held a further five conferences with the most recent being in Wellington in 2018.

How it started....



How it's going...





PROMOTING AND CELEBRATING WOMEN IN FIREFIGHTING

Women and Firefighting Australasia Inc.

- **OUR VISION**

- Promoting equity across our sector to empower all women to embrace their strengths.

- **OUR MISSION**

- In collaboration with individuals, communities and emergency services, we build confidence and empower women to achieve their full potential and be supported, as women, in their roles within our sector.

- **OBJECTIVES**

- The objectives of WAFWA are:
 1. To facilitate and support women in taking an active role in defining and shaping the role of women in the firefighting and emergency services industries by promoting the expectations of and contribution by women to the sector.
 2. To provide a vehicle for women, in conjunction with their colleagues in the industry, to:
 - foster and promote increased understanding and awareness of the contribution and capabilities that women bring to the firefighting and emergency management sector;
 - create opportunities for frank exchange and discussion of the challenges, issues and opportunities for women in the sector;
 - facilitate change through solutions and actions cooperatively developed with our colleagues in the sector; and
 - generate opportunities for the development of knowledge and practical experience in roles of leadership and management.



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Practical Step for recruitment

- A review of language to ensure respect and representation.
- Key messages for services, partners and media.
- Developing social media policies and presence to directly recruit women and support them as cadets.
- Insuring policies and procedures are in place to not only recruit women but retain them in the workplace as well.





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Practical Steps for Leadership and Mentoring

- The collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data (man, woman and other) to ensure robust evidence for policy and planning in the services.
- Adoption of strategy, policy and practice to reach gender equity in leadership in emergency management services.
- Mentorship is the right model for growing some women into leaders in our organisations. For others, sponsorship is what is needed. The quality required in a mentor and sponsor is that they have institutional power. Men and women can both be excellent at mentoring and sponsoring women.
- The inclusion of diverse leadership models in leadership training to ensure we have capacity to address the challenge of contemporary and future emergency management.
- Leadership programs can come at a personal cost. It is therefore important to have appropriate support mechanisms in place for leaders working as women leading change.





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Practical Steps for Health and Wellbeing

- Recognise post-traumatic stress, and post-traumatic growth, as unexceptional risks in the work.
- Protective factors are complex. More research is needed in order to understand how things like ‘family connection’, an acknowledged protective factor for firefighters, are gendered – that is play a different role for men and women firefighters.
- Recognise the profound impact harassment and discrimination have when they come on top of the normalised emotional load.
- Recognise the role of institutional courage in confronting discrimination and harassment and its power to transform our organisations.
- Addressing the gendered health and wellbeing of the job requires thoughtful consideration for the whole team. This might include a working group within each service that considers an action plan for the following gendered physical realities: maternity/paternity leave; flexible work for single parents and women returning from pregnancy, miscarriage and child birth; the impacts of pre-menopause and menopause; the impacts of suicide by colleagues; the physical impacts of sexual assault and harassment; domestic and family violence impacts.



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As Brené Brown articulates: “Connection is the energy that is created between people when they feel seen, heard and valued, when they can give and receive without judgement.”





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**Here is your
opportunity to
contribute to our data...**



