

A response to the growing gender gap

A transformative and measurable agenda is urgently needed in the maritime sector, writes **Jillian Carson-Jackson**

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

falls on 8 March but every year is celebrated throughout March. This year's theme for IWD was 'I am Generation Equality: Realizing Women's Rights'. However, based on the Measure for Measure report on gender equality in Australia we are seeing a growing gap.

Australia is falling behind the rest of the world on the Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index. In 2006 Australia ranked 15th in the world. Not bad. In 2020 Australia is 44th. Yes, a drop of 29 places. The report is available at weforum.org, along with the 'Mind the 100 year Gap' and the 'Global Gender Gap Report 2020'.

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Looking at the four key areas used for the GGGI, Australia ranks 49th in economic participation and opportunity, down from the ranking of 12 in 2006; 104th for health and survival, down from the ranking of 57 in 2006; and 57th for political empowerment, down from the ranking of 32 in 2006.

Australia ranked first for education – along with 24 other countries including Austria, Botswana, Canada, Colombia, Finland, France, Latvia, the Maldives and Nicaragua. This is the only category where Australia maintained its ranking from 2006.

Women are working hard in Australia, but in more traditional roles of people and culture, content production, marketing and sales. Areas such as cloud computing have 12% representation, engineering is 19% and data and AI have 27% representation by women. These figures are pretty much in line with global percentages.

Clearly there is much to do.

We see ongoing reports that about 2% of seafarers are women. Looking at the global data from the World Economic Forum, it shows that gender parity will not be attained for 99.5 years.

A TRANSFORMATIVE AGENDA

A true 'transformative and measurable agenda' is needed. Do we have one for maritime? The 31st assembly of the IMO adopted Resolution A.1147(31) aimed at preserving the legacy of the WMD theme from 2019 and achieving a barrier-free working environment for women in maritime. The resolution urges governments and industry to identify ways to overcome constraints, with a focus on recruitment, training and capacity-building. This is being implemented in many areas – an example is the recent maritime charter announcement in Denmark. Aimed at shipping companies, the charter identifies measures, such as ensuring someone at senior management is appointed to take responsibility for a strategy to increase the number of women working in their field.

ARE QUOTAS THE ANSWER?

Include-Empower.com recently reported on inclusive recruitment – the research they quote indicates that, if the final candidate pool has one minority candidate, they have a low chance of being hired. If there are two female candidates in the



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final candidate pool, the odds of hiring a female candidate is 79 times higher. If there are at least two minority candidates in the final candidate pool, the odds of hiring a minority candidate jumps to 194 times higher. So, an initial step may be to set targets for candidates. ■

IDEAS FOR INCLUSION

■ If you were to develop a strategy to encourage and promote women in the maritime industry, ashore and afloat, what might it look like? I have a few ideas:

Visibility – it is hard to imagine a role in an industry if you are unaware of the industry. What can be done to raise visibility of the maritime industry?

Education – include maritime transport as a key element of age-appropriate curriculum. Link this with existing transport modules for lower grades, then provide more of the science behind the maritime industry in the middle grades followed by career opportunities for years 10-12.

Culture – the maritime industry has a wonderful heritage but this should not inhibit inclusion. What can be done to promote a supportive and inclusive culture?

Representation – this is about having women represented at all levels. The opportunity to influence policy decisions that, until recently, may not have been developed with diversity in mind. Policies may have been developed to promote women or minority groups, but these were developed by majority groups. It is time to listen to those for whom the policies are being developed.