Media Release.

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UNCONSCIOUS BIAS¹ REVEALED AS THE MISSING PIECE IN THE GENDER EQUALITY PUZZLE

- Almost a quarter (22%) of men see their gender as an advantage at work
- Almost two thirds (64%) of Australian professionals are not familiar with the term “unconscious bias”
- Once aware of the term, nearly half (46%) of the professional women surveyed believe they have experienced unconscious bias in the workplace

The 2014 Westpac Women of Influence Report has found that professional women² continue to face challenges at work, despite a high level of awareness of the gender gap from their male counterparts.

The report, launched to support the final nominations phase for the Australian Financial Review and Westpac 100 Women of Influence Awards, found that men are twice as likely (22%) to see their gender as an advantage at work than women (9%). It was also revealed that more than half of women (55%) believe that they must work harder to receive the professional recognition they deserve, with two in five men (43%) also acknowledging this as an issue for females.

The national survey of 1,000 professionals uncovered that the majority of both genders agree on the continued existence of the glass ceiling (74% of women, 57% of men); a significant percentage still experience a ‘boys club’ culture (46% of women, 32% of men) and see the boardroom as a patriarchal institution (64% of women, 61% of men).

“Recognition from both genders about the barriers women face at work shows just how far we’ve progressed in this conversation,” said Larke Riemer, Westpac’s Director of Women’s Markets.

¹ According to the Diversity Council of Australia, unconscious bias refers to the concept that “individuals can have a bias that influences decision making in a manner that the individual is unaware. In other words, day-to-day decisions are informed by stereotypes that an individual is not consciously aware of having.”
² Professional women (and men) defined as aged between 25-65 years, working full-time, part-time or self-employed and earning more than $85,000 per annum.
“Gender issues aren’t just women’s issues; they are community issues because they impact productivity, companies’ bottom lines and the nation’s overall economy. So it’s really up to employers, employees, colleagues, government, partners and society to address this and find solutions.”

The Westpac Women of Influence Report found that almost two thirds (64%) of Australian professionals are not familiar with the term “unconscious bias”. Once they were made aware of the term however, nearly half (46%) of the women surveyed believe they have experienced this bias in the workplace.

The majority (61% of women and 55% of men) also said they would like to see an increased awareness of both unconscious bias and discriminatory behaviour at work. However, only a small number of respondents (6% of women and 11% of men) proactively suggested an education or training program, and a further 15% of men and 16% of women didn’t know what do to about the problem, highlighting the challenges associated with finding solutions to overcome gender hurdles.

“Over one in five men still see their gender as an advantage at work which is very telling. Employers and employees need to take stock of their decision making processes to ensure there are concrete policies in place to overcome bias. We’ve been doing this at Westpac with an unconscious bias training program that educates our staff to slow down their natural decision-making process to ensure they are making conscious and informed decisions to avoid inflicting their own bias on others and continue breaking down gender barriers,” said Ms. Riemer.

“This new study highlights the importance of initiatives such as the 100 Women of Influence Awards which profile influential female leaders and help to promote positive role models. This is just once element in the equation that can help assist us to create workplaces in Australia where recognition and participation will be based on merit over gender.”

The Australian Financial Review and Westpac 100 Women of Influence Awards program celebrates outstanding and influential women across corporate, community, arts, philanthropy, public and not-for-profit sectors. Entries close next Sunday, 10 August and all Australians are invited to nominate the influential women in their lives. Entry forms can be downloaded at www.100womenofinfluence.com.au.

Key Findings – Westpac Women of Influence Report

Gender in the workplace

- Men are twice as likely as women to think that their gender gives them an advantage in the workplace (22%, cf. 9% of women)
- More than half of women (55%) feel that women need to work harder to get the professional recognition they deserve. Men are less likely to agree with this statement (43%), although 2 in 5 acknowledge this issue
- Three-quarters of women believe that women are still battling the glass ceiling in Australia, compared to just over half of men (74%, cf. 57%)
- Both genders acknowledge that the boardroom continues to be a patriarchal institution (64% of women, 61% of men)
- Almost one in two (46%) women say that a boys club culture exists in their company, compared to just under one in three men (32%)
- Almost two in five respondents of both genders agreed that men tend to employ other men (39% men, 40% women)

Unconscious Bias

- 64% of Australian professionals are not familiar with the term “unconscious bias”
- Nearly half (46%) of the women surveyed believe they have experienced this bias in the workplace
- More than half of respondents would like to see increased awareness of unconscious bias/discrimination (61% of women, 55% of men)
- The most commonly suggested ways to counter unconscious bias are:
  - Treat everyone equally based on ability (12% women, 15% men)
  - Talk to people involved (13% women, 11% men)
  - Point it out/call it out/ speak up (13% women, 8% men)
  - Education/training (6% women, 11% men)
  - Ignore it/get on with the job (9% women, 5% men)
  - 16% of men and 15% of women do not know how to combat unconscious bias

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Media Enquiries:
Adele Gilbert
Map and Page
P: 02 9368 4501 M: 0422 352 041
E: adele.gilbert@mapandpage.com.au

Augusta Goldsmith
Map and Page
P: 02 9368 4508 M: 0411 612 850
E: augusta.goldsmith@mapandpage.com.au

Notes to Editors

About rubyconnection.com.au
rubyconnection.com.au is an interactive online community designed to inspire, educate, promote and connect Australian women no matter what they do, where they live and who they bank with. Ruby provides an opportunity for all Australian women to learn from each other. Westpac was the first Australian bank with a business unit exclusively dedicated to supporting women – working alongside women to help them build sustainable and profitable futures via the provision of education, information and networking opportunities across Australia. www.rubyconnection.com.au.
About the survey
This survey was commissioned by Westpac and powered by Sweeney Research. It was driven by an online polling of 1,000 Australians, sourced from the Research Now Online Panel. A copy of the executive summary of the report is available upon request.

100 Women of Influence Key Dates
- Entries close – Sunday 10 August 2014
- Finalists announced in The Australian Financial Review in early October
- Entry forms can be downloaded at www.100womenofinfluence.com.au
- Completed entries can be uploaded online at www.100womenofinfluence.com.au
- For more information about the 2014 100 Women of Influence Awards, please visit www.100womenofinfluence.com.au
- Winners announced – Wednesday 22 October 2014 at a gala event held in Sydney’s Town Hall