

# Ministerial PJPs Champion Gender Equity

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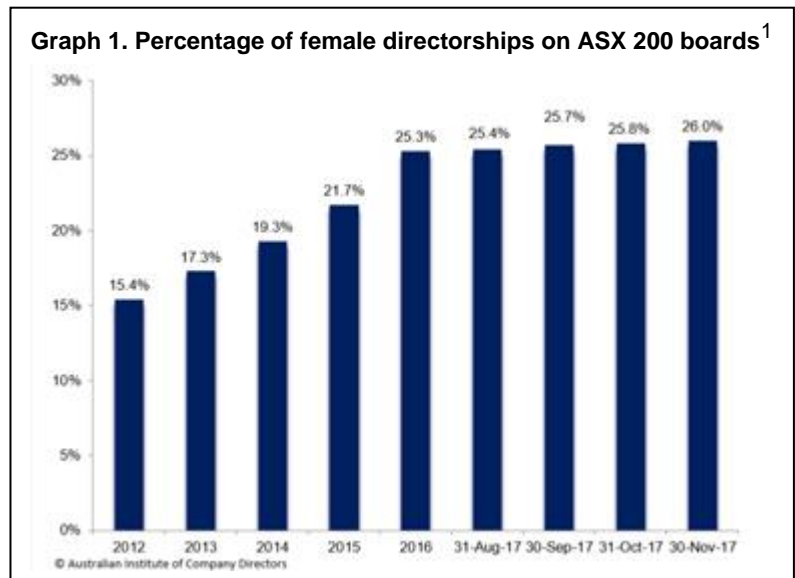
A group of lay-led Australian Catholic organisations has more women than men in their governance structures. This is in stark contrast to Australia's corporate sector which struggles get close to the target of 30% women on Boards set by the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD)<sup>1</sup>.

In December 2017, the Association of Ministerial Public Juridic Persons (AMPJP) surveyed its members and found:

- 60% of Trustees are women; and
- 52% of the members of the Boards of Ministerial Public Juridic Persons (PJP) are women.

PJP is the name Church law<sup>2</sup> gives to an organisation established by the Church to provide services and own property as, and in the name of, the Church. Ministerial PJPs are unique in that they both represent the Church and are controlled by lay people. In Australia, almost all Ministerial PJPs were established by Religious Institutes to: (1) continue their ministries as the Religious Institute members were unable to do so or wanted to move into new more prophetic/missionary activities and (2) enable further lay participation in the mission of Jesus and the ministries of the Church.

The corporate sector seeks to increase the number of women on boards for several reasons: to comply with company values of merit/respect; to satisfy shareholder/stakeholder expectations and to improve decision making. The AICD draws on extensive Australian and International research that shows the vital link between diversity within a board and the quality of its decision making<sup>3</sup>. Even with these compelling reasons many of the largest 200 companies on the Australian Stock Exchange have not yet reached the AICD target of 30% women directors (see Graph 1). There are currently eight ASX200 companies that have no women on their boards<sup>4</sup>.



Corporate Australia is not alone in struggling to adequately involving women. In the late 1990s, the Australian Catholic Church was so concerned about the position of women in the Church that it commissioned a study that resulted in the document "Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus". This study found:

<sup>1</sup> <http://aicd.companydirectors.com.au/advocacy/board-diversity/progress-towards-achieving-30-per-cent-female-representation-across-asx-200-boards-has-stalled>

<sup>2</sup> The Code of Canon Law (Canon 116 §3 ) [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/\\_INDEX.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_INDEX.HTM)

<sup>3</sup> <http://aicd.companydirectors.com.au/advocacy/board-diversity/research-and-reports>

<sup>4</sup> <http://aicd.companydirectors.com.au/advocacy/board-diversity/mixed-news-in-latest-report-on-progress-to-30-per-cent-target>

*The very limited participation of women in decision-making at present and the need to increase women's involvement in decision-making at all levels were constant and major themes.<sup>5</sup>*

Religious Institutes of women are the notable exception. These have always been governed by women and have enabled women to undertake non-traditional roles.

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference committed to advancing the place of women in the Church through their 2000 Annual Social Justice Statement, *Woman and Man: The Bishops Respond*.<sup>6</sup>

Concern about the lack of progress on the place of women within the Catholic Church has also been voiced more recently by Pope Francis:

*I readily acknowledge that many women share pastoral responsibilities with priests, helping to guide people, families and groups and offering new contributions to theological reflection. But we need to create still broader opportunities for a more incisive female presence in the Church. Because “the feminine genius is needed in all expressions in the life of society, the presence of women must also be guaranteed in the workplace” and in the various other settings where important decisions are made, both in the Church and in social structures.<sup>7</sup>*

For the Church, women's presence is integral to its role and identity of continuing the mission of Jesus Christ. The Gospels contain many instances where Jesus broke with social conventions and treated women as being equally created "in the image of God". The Apostle Paul appointed women to leadership positions in the churches he established and famously said:

*There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28)*

It is within this context of corporate and Church struggle that the achievement of gender equity at the governance level of Ministerial PJPs appears extraordinary. Ministerial PJPs are demonstrating that there are sufficient women with the skills, experience and interest to fulfil governance roles in large and complex organisations. As existing Ministerial PJP Trustees and board directors move on, succession planning will be crucial to the maintenance of gender equity. While the Catholic Church often, and deservedly, has a reputation for being male-dominated, the Ministerial PJPs show that the Church can also be a place of inclusion, diversity, justice and respect.

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<sup>5</sup> Executive summary, MacDonald et al. (1999) *Woman and Man One in Christ Jesus, Report of the Participation of Women in the Catholic Church in Australia*, Harper Collins: Sydney <http://www.opw.catholic.org.au/resources-menu-resources-94/woman-and-man-one-in-christ-jesus-resource-kit.html#.WhYmv0qWaUk>

<sup>6</sup> ACBC (2000) *Woman and Man: The Bishops Respond* <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/files/SJSandresources/2000-SJSS-Statement.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Pope Francis (2013) *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium* # 103 [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html)

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The AMPJP was formed in 2016 and its Member organisations are:

1. **St John of God Australia Limited** (*Hospitals and health care in WA, Vic, NSW*);
2. **MercyCare** (*aged care, family, community, health and disability services in WA*);
3. **Mercy Partners** (*Education, hospitals, aged care and community services in QLD*);
4. **Trustees of Edmund Rice Education Australia** (*Schools and youth programs in WA, NT, SA, Vic, NSW, Tas, NSW, QLD*);
5. **Dominican Education Australian Limited** (*Schools and learning centres in SA, Vic and NSW*);
6. **Trustees of Catholic Healthcare** (*Hospitals, health services, aged care and community services in NSW and QLD*);
7. **Calvary Ministries Ltd** (*Hospitals, health care, aged care and community care in NT, SA, Vic, NSW, Tas*);
8. **Mary Aitkenhead Ministries** (*Hospitals, health services, aged care, schools and social services in NSW, QLD, Vic*);
9. **Good Samaritan Education** (*Schools in NSW and Vic*); and
10. **Trustees of Kildare Ministries** (*Schools and women's/family services in QLD, SA, NSW and Vic*).