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Where are those proud male 'champions of change' when you need them?

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The support of men means nothing so women must stop seeking it.

Hes for Shes. Male Champions of Change. Male feminists. By all means support women. Just stop expecting special names and special recognition for work you should be doing anyway.

Here's the most disappointing example: those men who pranced about three years ago telling us that they were Male Champions of Change when it came to gender equity are now strangely absent.

The Workplace Gender Equality has revealed significant information about gender equality in the Australian workplace this month. Today, we learn of the gaping difference between what men are paid and what women are paid. Two weeks ago the WGEA revealed a significant drop in the number of organisations named as Employers of Choice, from 125 to 76.

Yes, those heroes of gender equality, the Male Champions of Change, are missing in action on that [list of Employers of Choice](#).

- Alan Joyce is a Male Champion of Change but Qantas has flown off the list. Elmer Funke Kupper, Managing Director and CEO, ASX
- Limited can't seem to get women enough of a share to make sure the ASX has a citation.
- Grant O'Brien, the CEO and managing director of Woolworths may well be in charge of the fresh food people but not the gender equity people

Male Champions of Change? Male stalwarts of stasis, more like it. I am sick of all the He for She, let's involve men and praise them endlessly for doing what so many women do quietly all the time. And after looking at this list, I'm sceptical of these self-proclaimed champions. Champions are meant to be winners. Or at least those who make a big effort. And the list of workplaces which should be on that list and aren't is devastating. All sectors, all sizes. The new tougher rules make it hard to achieve Employer of Choice status yet there are representatives in many difficult sectors.

We can't buttonhole individual companies about their gender pay gap from the WGEA information released today. But we can certainly identify the worst performing. Biggest pay gap for base remuneration is the finance sector at just over 28 per cent. But if you look at total pay, the gap in finance is even bigger. Rae Cooper, associate professor at the University of Sydney in the business school and part of the Women and Work research group, says the real story here is about bonuses. When you count those, the pay gap in finance is 36 per cent. Women get bonuses but they just aren't as big.

Other sectors with big base pay gaps? Administrative and support services (what, even there?) and professional, scientific and technical services. Manufacturing, mining and construction all look pretty good in comparison – if you can call gaps of 12 to 18 per cent good. I guess it's all context really, isn't it?

The least worst? Where you'd expect it – in education and training where the gap is a little over seven per cent.

Cooper says we also need to carefully examine what she describes as the pyramid. The base is all women but the further to the top you get, those women just disappear. "It's more like a needle than a pyramid."

The bad news precedes good news, according to both Conway and Cooper. All this data will make it absolutely impossible for companies to avoid the truth. Right now, on its way to all the companies which report to the WGEA are individualised reports. CEOs will know the truth about just how badly they are doing.

"Now people have the data, there will be nowhere to run, nowhere to hide," says Conway.

Why is the progress so slow? Conway believes that it's all policy and no strategy – in other words, high mindedness but no gritty detail. She's also quite generous in her assessment of most CEOs. "Everyone is well intentioned but it's not working because they have disconnected initiatives," she said.

The data is one way to fix that – but the WGEA has more. Its executive director of education and innovation Heidi Sundin will turn up to companies with her doctor's kit to fix stubborn gender inequality problems in organisations. Actually, the WGEA calls it a toolkit but you get the idea – it's a way for companies to move from being avoiders to sustainers, from ignoring the problem to getting gender equality right, from pay to position.

Rae Cooper, of the University of Sydney, says there are three Rs of gender equality at work. When wages are regulated, reported and revealed, there is a big shift to pay equity. More scrutiny means you see the gap, but the gap is less bad because of the transparency.

"I think these sectors [such as education and public administration] have a lot to teach other sectors," she says. The three Rs could be put to good use across other sectors.

Helen Conway, director of the WGEA, says it's all fixable now we have the numbers but some companies are already shaping their own culture. She names David Thodey of Telstra as impressive. "The power of his leadership is incredible," she says. Conway says that the female board members take gender equality seriously and credits Catherine Livingstone and Margaret (Margie) Seale for much of the work.

Behind every Male Champion of Change? Women who know how change is made.

This story was found at: <http://www.dailylife.com.au/news-and-views/dl-opinion/where-are-those-proud-male-champions-of-change-when-you-need-them-20141125-11t3zs.html>