

## 2020 AIRAANZ Conference: Stream proposal

### DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY: EXPLORING ORGANISATIONAL FEMINIST CHANGE MECHANISMS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

#### Stream Leaders

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Over the past few years, both the Australian and state governments have developed and are implementing gender equality strategies for their workforces (see for example, APSC, 2016). While these strategies contain many good initiatives, implementation can be hampered by a lack of commitment and a sense that gender has been “done” (Williamson et al, forthcoming). Viewing gender equality as a non-issue is symptomatic of “gender fatigue”. Gender fatigue arises when organisations purportedly are gender-neutral, yet discrimination continues to exist (Kelan 2009). Workers who are weary of gender issues may construct their narratives in the workplace to position sex discrimination as occurring in the past and now fixed and/or to deem acts of discrimination as an exception (Kelan 2016, Gill *et al.* 2017).

Organisations also experience gender fatigue as part of a broader change management fatigue. While many organisations have been implementing gender equality initiatives, strategies are framed as one-off, discrete initiatives that do not lead to lasting change and hence need to be continually repeated (Cunningham et al 1999). Further, interventions are often fragmented, superficial and poorly implemented (Benschop and van den Brink, 2014). Change mechanisms are also hampered by a lack of understanding of the concept of “gender equality” and the difficulties of de-gendering organisations (Williamson et al, forthcoming).

We invite papers that focus on any of the following, or associated topics:

- Dimensions of gender fatigue and resistance to gender equality
- Theoretical framings of gender fatigue and resistance
- Strategies to overcome gender fatigue and resistance
- Organisational change mechanisms to engender change
- Examples of successful gender change strategies and initiatives

#### References

- Australian Public Service Commission (APSC), 2016. Balancing the Future: The Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2016–19. Retrieved from: <http://www.apsc.gov.au/publications-and-media/current-publications/gender-equality-strategy>.
- Benschop, Y and van den Brink, M (2014) “Power and Resistance in Gender Equality Strategies: Comparing quotas and small wins”, in *The Oxford Handbook of Gender in Organizations*, eds. S. Kumra, R. Simpson, R. Burke, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cunningham, R., Lord, A. and Delaney, L. (1999) “Next Steps” for Equality?: The Impact of Organizational Change on Opportunities for Women in the Civil Service’, *Gender, Work and Organization*, 6(2), pp. 67–78. doi: 10.1111/1468-0432.00071.
- Gill, R., Kelan, E., Scharff, C., 2017. “A Postfeminist Sensibility at Work”. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 24(3), 226-244.
- Kelan, E., 2009. “Gender fatigue: The ideological dilemma of gender neutrality and discrimination in organizations”. *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences*, 26(3), 197–210.
- Williamson, S, Colley, L and Foley, M (forthcoming) “Human Resource Devolution, Decoupling and Incoherence: How line managers manage gender equality reforms”, *Public Management Review*.