

A resource sheet for boards

Queensland Parole Boards

As a result of legislative change, the two regional Queensland Parole Boards now have 11 women and eight men taking seats at the board table. This gender balance ensures diversity of opinion throughout the community. This resource sheet reinforces some of the benefits of having more women on boards.

Positive change

Prior to July 2006, there were seven Community Corrections Boards – six regional boards and a Queensland board. A recent restructure has resulted in the establishment of three Queensland Parole Boards. A positive result of these changes has been the establishment of an equitable gender balance.

The Queensland Parole Board based in Brisbane considers applications for parole and resettlement leave programs by offenders with sentences of eight years and over. It has eight members, and legislation mandates that two of these members must be women.

Before the six regional boards merged to become two, the gender distribution of these boards was 17 women and 26 men. Part of the amalgamation process included a legislative change to ensure consistency and require at least two women and one Indigenous representative on all boards. Reflecting this, the Central and Northern Queensland Regional Parole Board and the Southern Queensland Regional Parole Board now have a mandate for at least two women on each board. The new gender distribution as a result of these changes is 11 women and eight men.

Why mandate diversity?

In 1989 a review of corrections services resulted in a report recommending the establishment of independent Community Corrections Boards that better reflected the population. It was recognised that a board reflective of the community needed to include the expertise and perspectives of women and Indigenous Australians.

The Manager of the Parole Boards' Secretariat strongly supports a good gender balance because it allows for broader community input. He believes having women on boards ensures diverse perspectives and that a 'male' methodology does not operate. This does not mean, however, that all women members agree with each other or that there is a recognisable 'women's point of view'. Diverse opinions are required when decisions are linked to community risk or rehabilitation of an offender. A diverse board membership is an important strategy to ensure a diversity of opinion, and therefore good outcomes, are achieved.

Demonstrated commitment

Legislation is important to ensure all three Parole Boards include at least two women and one Indigenous representative in their eight members. Underlying the legislative requirements is the recognition that women make an important contribution to boards. It is this recognition, and a conscious effort to attract women board members, that most influence the gender balance.

Diversity on Government boards enables a better representation of Queensland's communities. The Queensland Parole Boards clearly demonstrate this commitment.

More information on the *Women on Boards* Strategy can be found on the Office for Women's website. Visit www.women.qld.gov.au/womenonboards or call 1800 177 577 between 8.00am and 6.00pm.