

*A resource sheet for women*

## An interview with Vanessa Brewis

As CEO of her own IT company, Vanessa Brewis had never considered board participation until she undertook board readiness training. Now she has extensive board experience and shares some ideas about how organisations can genuinely encourage more women on boards.



### Introducing Vanessa Brewis

Vanessa Brewis is the CEO of Taurus Software, an IT company that Ms Brewis founded. She currently sits on the board of Taurus Software Solutions and is a Director of Taurus Hold, an investment company. Until the board was recently retired, Ms Brewis was also a Director of the Ergon Energy Retail Board and a member of the Financial Risk Management Committee and the Business Development Committee.

### Training and career development

Ms Brewis has qualifications in law and in commerce. “My legal training provides a solid grounding for board participation, while my financial experience gives me a commercial edge.” In particular, Ms Brewis’ previous employment involved preparing board management reports, giving her a working knowledge of corporate governance and board processes before she became a Director.

Ms Brewis is a member of Women in Technology (WIT). Although she hadn’t considered board appointments, Ms Brewis was inspired to participate in the inaugural WIT Board Readiness program in 2003. This program builds skills required for board participation and promotes the benefits of women on boards.

“I have also completed the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) residential Company Directors Course. Despite having knowledge of corporate governance from previous work I found the course invaluable and recommend it as essential training. Shortly after completing this training I was appointed to the Ergon Energy Retail Board.”

### Board skills

“Three qualities I regard as crucial for any Director are integrity, intellect and experience. Most important is the capacity to apply these in the boardroom.”

Because various lunches and briefings are a necessary part of keeping up-to-date, an interest in networking is beneficial.

### Diversity on boards

“Board diversity can benefit board processes by working against ‘groupthink’ to create a board culture open to debate. An outcome of this is better strategic decision making.”

“One way to support board diversity is through work-life balance strategies that enable women’s participation in leadership roles.” Ms Brewis is committed to achieving work-life balance, and believes that boards have a role in setting high corporate standards.

### Women’s participation on boards

“Mentoring, specific training, and strategies such as the Office for Women’s *Women on Boards* are important in getting women better represented on boards.” Ms Brewis also suggests more than one woman needs to be appointed to avoid tokenism. “Change could be encouraged through an incentive scheme for organisations, for example, or a think tank to develop innovative strategies to get women better represented on boards.”

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](http://www.women.qld.gov.au/womenonboards) or call 1800 177 577 between 8.00am and 6.00pm.