



Research Paper One

Gender and Firefighting

MFB Gender Equity Research Project 2004

Paper One:

Gender and Firefighting

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MFB 2004

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This paper is the first of three papers documenting the broad issues surrounding gender in fire services internationally and locally. Staff input into the MFB gender research conducted in 2003-2004 was confidential and all three papers now form part of the educational strategy arising from the confidential research findings.

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FOREWORD

This report is the culmination of significant contributions involving staff across all areas of the MFB.

The MFB specific findings included in this report emerged from extensive workforce consultation involving individual face to face interviews, focus groups and telephone interviews with over 100 operational and corporate staff from all ranks and levels within the MFB. The project team attempted to ensure that the representation of participants reflected the existing workforce make up and ensured that men were well represented.

All interviews and focus groups were presented with the same set of questions and requested to provide feedback on their experiences within the MFB. The findings within this report reflect only those issues which were consistently raised in the interviews.

The project team agreed to share the final draft of this document with all women firefighters before its public release as we well recognise they may be most impacted by its content. **We would like at this stage to acknowledge the concerns some women expressed in relation to the final report including that it does not highlight the positive experiences many of the women have had working with their male colleagues and does not acknowledge those men that have quietly supported women and helped them achieve success on the job.**

This scope of the research did not extend beyond identifying and reporting on those issues that may impact on gender equity within the MFB.

The project team would like to acknowledge the many men that contributed to this report and clearly demonstrated their support for greater gender equity, respect and a supportive workplace culture within the MFB. We would also like to thank all those participants who bravely shared difficult experiences and took the first steps in acknowledging those cultural elements which prevent some of our workplaces from allowing us to contribute to the best of our ability.

**Georgia Prattis
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As I have spent time within the MFB it is easy to be impressed by the uniformed and corporate personnel and their commitment to their profession and the public. Many women and men engaged with me robustly about the gender issues and challenges and contradictions they see facing the MFB. I appreciated all these conversation for their honesty and commitment to making the MFB a more gender balanced workplace. It was not only the formal group and individual interviews but the informal conversations in corridors and on the fireground that were so important to me in understanding the complexity of the gender and firefighting issues.

Thank you to all those who gave interviews and contributed both positive and difficult experiences from their fire service work. As so many interviewees said, the positive must not be lost in fixing up the not so positive. Everyone spoke of the rich and rewarding times their MFB work had given them alongside the more difficult experiences. It is important to note here too that both women and men have felt the cost of the gender imbalance.

I cannot write the acknowledgements without thanking a few people who have assisted the project in very significant ways. Georgia Prattis as the Access and Equity Advisor, has been unwavering in her commitment to social justice and a fairer and more gender balanced MFB. It is always difficult to stand up for gender issues in any organisation and Georgia never took her attention off the long term road map and professionally supported the research process with that endearing commitment of hers. The project would not have happened without her. I would also like to thank CEO Peter Akers, Jim Carlisle, Kirstie Schroder, Mick Swift and Louise Cannon for their clarity and commitment at very different times and in very different ways. They all stood up for the issues at important times in the project and gave clarity and insights that were fundamental to the long term potential of this project. Last but not least, Dr Dave Baigent from the Fire Research Unit at the Anglia Polytechnic University in the UK gave so much invisible support to the project from overseas. His earlier cultural research findings and his own experience and insights as a firefighter and academic researcher were crucial in reinforcing many of the emerging issues.

There were many challenges for me as an academic researcher walking into an organisation such as the MFB. I was definitely the outsider. I was welcomed by so many women and men who shared their experiences and went out of their way to spend time explaining and describing the history and the issues. Thank you for your courage and candour and this series of public papers has been written with your contribution clearly in mind.

Sue Lewis

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Preamble

This Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board (MFB) project makes history in metropolitan fire fighting services in Australia. It is the first large scale fire industry 'gender research project' in Australia and as such has had particular challenges and dilemmas. The MFB is not alone in having mostly male operational fire fighters. In many ways the findings and issues directly parallel those elsewhere in the fire industry internationally. Research around the world to understand the masculine history of firefighting has generated uncomfortable findings and will generate diverse views: these findings also represent an opportunity to reflect and implement a progressive set of policies and programs.

This paper is one of a series of three background information papers prepared as part of a gender equity project for the MFB. This paper focuses on the gendered culture of firefighting around the world and the issues for women and men as they become firefighters today. The other two papers focus on gender issues in training and on gender issues in recruitment and selection processes. All three papers contain a summary of the relevant findings from the Gender Equity Research Project within the MFB and a list of associated recommendations from the MFB Gender Equity Five -year Framework which is forming the basis of an Action Plan currently being implemented within the MFB.

The Gender Equity Research Project for the MFB was based on the premise that any change program must be based on a clear picture of the existing cultural dynamics within the MFB in order to understand the ways in which these cultural factors perpetuate the under-representation of women and ameliorate efforts to address the gender imbalance. The MFB wanted the information and organisational knowledge to plan an effective change program.

Firefighters around the world are heroes in the hearts and minds of the public and nowhere was this more globally transparent than in the tragedy of 9 / 11 in New York. However research into the culture of firefighting worldwide has also shown disturbing and quite 'uniform' characteristics have been normalised by many under the guise of tradition and herein lies the challenge for all fire services in accommodating difference in the future. The formal ways 'things have been done' are coupled to the justifiable public hero role and image but the informal ways things have been done off the fire ground have not always matched this image.

The professional and the personal attitudes surrounding discussions of gender in any organisation can be complex and sometimes contradictory to the theoretical field of what is known about gender and organisational life. The research and organisational experience of gender relations in most male dominated organisations indicate that developing and acting on a gender-based change strategy in the MFB will be complex. Gender issues are still too often viewed as a nuisance and as a threat to the successful image of firefighters around the world.

However, it is also timely and provides an opportunity for the MFB - judging by the data from around Australia - to become a national and international leader in the field. As the leadership of the MFB already know, gender balance will only be achieved with committed, consistent and thoughtful leadership over time. Developing and implementing the change strategy will require both strong executive leadership by all in the MFB as well as 'collaborative' leadership that resides in the hearts and minds of many firefighters and managers. A 5 year framework is proposed.

Each year of the Five-year Framework (2004/2005 –2009/2010) will have a key focus to enhance the central objective to achieve significantly more representation of women within the operational and corporate strands of the MFB. Year One 2004/2005 is targeted at operational leadership in recognition of the critical under-representation of operational women and the importance of making the most of each recruitment selection round. It does not mean that the issues for corporate women will be ignored alongside this emphasis: there will be strategies for corporate women in 2004/5 but even more in 2005/2006 when corporate women will assume a more central focus.

The MFB Gender Equity Five -year Framework is based on four key recommendation areas with specific actions and indicators of success within each area:

- Leadership and Accountability
- Organisational Development
- Recruitment and Retention of Women Firefighters
- Training and Placement of Recruit Firefighters

These headings arise out of the literature on successful organisational change as well as the specific issues and sensitivities surrounding the issue of gender in fire services worldwide. The wholesale transplant of generic change strategies into a culture such as the MFB will not succeed. Fire services around the world are having difficulties making the cultural changes required and only a sustained, multi-layered and long-term plan will work over time. There are no quick or simple solutions to this complex issue.

Executive Summary

Firefighting has been socially and organisationally shaped over time as a masculine occupation and it is not inherently so.

All metropolitan fire services around the industrialised world are being challenged to forge more gender-balanced services for the future and are finding that change is slow.

An overwhelming culture of stereotypical masculine values, attributes and attitudes are pervasive in fire service cultures and these are all very important in the firefighter job.

This situation, however, leads to a lack of gender balance both at the broad cultural level in fire services and in terms of the leadership models and templates.

The more stereotypical feminine values, attributes and attitudes are currently not valued alongside these in balance.

There is a tendency for more feminine associated styles to be put down through constant jokes, ridiculed and avoided at all costs: women are often judged as 'tokens' and honorary men.

There is a very real sense in which the standard of behaviour appropriate for women as firefighters is determined by group male behaviour which leaves women judged according to their participation in, or response to, traditional male behaviours such as joking, competition, sport and drinking.

Reconstructing the firefighter job now as more gender balanced is complex and not straightforward and hence the importance of cultural change for fire services around the world.

A more gender balanced fire service culture will exemplify, respect and value, a broader range of leadership styles and templates on which firefighters model themselves.

When gender and firefighting is discussed within operational contexts, misunderstandings arise from gender issues being heard as criticisms and a perception that masculine attributes are being judged as 'negative'. These are misconceptions and must be addressed in any cultural change program.

Firefighting needs both feminine and masculine attributes to be equally valued within the culture rather than change programs being misunderstood as privileging either feminine or masculine styles and attributes.

Change programs in fire services are not about replacing stereotypical masculine attributes with more feminine attributes. Gender attributes are not about alternatives. The focus is on developing an organisational culture where both feminine and masculine attributes are valued and accepted, within the one person whether female or male, as well as organisationally.

Section 1. The International Context for Gender and Firefighting

1.1. A sex segregated occupation

Firefighting worldwide remains one of the most sex-segregated professions. While international comparisons are difficult, the highest proportion of women in firefighting is around 15 per cent in some United States brigades after affirmative action over a considerable period, but more usually under 5% in fire services operating in western industrialised contexts (Baigent 1999, McGill 2002, WFS 2004).

The Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board (MFB) first opened its doors to female firefighters in 1988 to comply with state government equal opportunity laws and in response to changing social attitudes to the role of women in Australia. Since then, there has been a steady increase in the number of applications by women. Although there have been considerable efforts to promote firefighting as a career for women, recruitment intakes continue to be predominantly male: numbers at operational levels are still nearly 98 per cent men and at corporate levels 62 per cent men. There are few women in senior management roles. In early 2001, the MFB endorsed an Access and Equity Policy which sets out a commitment to building a workforce that more closely reflects the composition of metropolitan Melbourne's community. In this local and international context, the MFB recognises the value of a gender-balanced workforce and has identified the need to develop a specific long-term framework to help realise this objective.

An earlier project 'Reflecting Our Role in a Multicultural Community' (2002) sought consultation with key cultural groups in Melbourne and formed the first plank of the MFB's response to implementing the 2001 Access and Equity Policy. This gender focused research forms the second plank and expresses the commitment of the MFB to improving gender equity and identifying and removing all cultural and structural barriers that may be preventing improved recruitment, retention and promotion opportunities for women. Whilst the focus of the Gender Equity Research Project has been gender, the cultural implications have been integrated wherever possible using the findings from the Multicultural 2002 project and report. Theoretically, issues of gender, race and class as well as sexual identity are interconnected and any long term change initiative must continue to understand and action these connections. These connections will form a future change program at the MFB.

1.2. Gender profile of the MFB and other metropolitan fire services in Australia

During 2003-2004, the number of women firefighters in the MFB increased from 19 to 30 women. Whilst this was a 35% improvement in the numbers of operational women, the number of women firefighters was still less than 2% of the workforce. Table 1.1 profiles the magnitude of the challenge for the MFB with the numbers of operational and corporate women.

Table 1-1 Gender profile of the MFB June 2004

MFB STAFF	WOMEN	MEN	TOTAL	% WOMEN
Operational	25 (+5)*	1570	1600	1.9
Corporate	90	145	235	38.3
Overall	125	1715	1835	6.2

Table 1-2 Gender profile of operational staff in Australian Metropolitan Fire Services as of June 2004 Email Survey

FIRE SERVICE	WOMEN	MEN	TOTAL	% WOMEN
Fire and Emergency Services Authority Perth (FESA)	24	719	743	3.2
New South Wales Fire Brigade (1)	55	3,177	3,232	1.7
ACT Emergency Services Bureau	5	276	281	1.8
Queensland Fire and Rescue Service	55	1,852	1,907	2.9
Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service	2	162	164	1.2
South Australia Metropolitan Fire Service	4	742	746	0.5
Metropolitan Fire Brigade Melbourne	25 (+5)*	1570	1600	1.9
TOTALS (estimate only)	175	8498	8673	2.0

**MFB 25(+5) refers to 25 women firefighters and an additional 5 operational women who undertake some firefighter duties but are not technically classified as firefighters.*

Table 1.2 above profiles the numbers of women in these roles within the services listed and was obtained via an email survey directly to Australian fire agencies. These data may obscure differences in the definition of what constitutes a female firefighter but show a national pattern: metropolitan fire services in Australia are male dominated and average just 2% women. These data compare with similarly low numbers of women firefighters in London (3% in 2004), the UK more generally and in Canada. The numbers in NZ and the USA have shown significantly higher numbers where there have been long term intervention and recruitment programs running.

The US based 'Women in the Fire Service' is a nationally funded organisation that provides a range of resources and events for women in the US fire services. It also collects and posts data on the number of women employed as structural firefighters through its website <http://www.wfsi.org/index.html>. The December 2004 data for the US fire services with the highest percentage of women are:

- Minneapolis, Minnesota: 16%
- Madison, Wisconsin: 15%
- San Francisco, California: 15%
- Boulder, Colorado: 14%
- Miami Dade County, Florida: 13%

Several other departments have percentages of women firefighters in the 9 - 11% range. These percentages have been achieved after a long period of affirmative action.

There are few intensive programs or initiatives to recruit and retain women in fire services around Australia. There were no reported gender research projects or databases for targeting systemic change. There have been women targeted programs in a number of States (Queensland and Perth) where women have been encouraged to apply for selection as a firefighter (Adams and Perry 2002). The data for these states reflect the highest Australian data for women in metropolitan fire services.

1.3. Previous MFB initiatives

There have been sustained efforts by many in the MFB to specifically attract women into firefighting roles. Since 1989, recruit advertising has focused in some way on women with recent initiatives advertising in gymnasiums and women's sporting facilities and MFB attendance at community and sporting events where women attend.

Since 1998, MFB recruit advertising has broadened its focus to target Culturally and Linguistically Diverse and Indigenous groups. The MFB have endeavoured to promote recruitment from diverse community sectors by actively participating in employment events and including female firefighters at public forums where possible. The MFB have further maintained a database of "interested" females and provided support, advice and guidance as requested. Typically, prospective candidates have been put in contact with fire stations and physical education staff for advice and guidance in preparation for pre-entry tests as well as making recommendations concerning written aptitude tests and providing other advice in relation to general preparedness. The MFB's website also provides access to a section showing a female firefighter undertaking all these tasks.

In 2002 the prerequisite Heavy Rigid licence and First Aid certificate were removed to increase the pool of applicants. Recruitment intakes are now specifically directed at females through advertising at Fernwood Gyms and the Royal Lifesaving Society. However, there has not been a dramatic 'big splash' media event such as Christine Nixon orchestrated in 2003 for the Victoria Police. This campaign sent a very clear message to the Victorian Public that things were changing and women were welcome in VicPol.

1.4. Some gender theory and practice

The term gender is fundamental to understanding gender and change in firefighting organisations. Everyone has experience of gender in their lives and sorting out the different ways in which the term is used is important. Whilst the term sex refers to our biological designation as female or male, gender refers to the complex ways in which we are socially and psychologically constructed as women and men in our society. This background paper assumes that femininity and masculinity are socially constructed in dynamic ways - despite popular press notions of gender being fixed and natural eg 'boys will be boys'. Gender is anything but fixed and unchanging.

Gender is seen theoretically as a central organising feature of social life with implications for women and men AND organisational life. The writing and thinking about gender focuses on

two interrelated parts: *gender identity* is the sense that we make of being female or male as we grow up and learn socially acceptable ways to behave and *gender relations* is the way the social world is built through making distinctions between women and men. Power is a core element of gender relations and it is important to remember that as a society we confer more status and power to men relative to women.

The theoretical interpretation of gender and firefighting issues draw on contemporary theories of masculinity, particularly those expressed by Bob Connell and Lyn Segal, which stress the active and dynamic nature of gender construction (Connell 1995, Connell 2001, Segal 1998)). Men and boys are not passive in the face of masculine 'socialisation'. According to this view, gender construction is an active and ongoing process of meaning making, in which people interact with available cultural material – events at school, home, work and play - to create identities which work for them. Identity construction is generally not a fully conscious process, and the ideas that most of us hold about ourselves are characterised by contradictions and inconsistencies. These contradictions offer possibilities for engagement and constructive change.

Nobody will change simply because they are told that they have to. They will need to be convinced that there are reasons to change, and that these reasons relate to their own lives in important ways.

Central to contemporary theories of masculinity is the concept of *dominant* or *hegemonic* masculinity. This concept states that masculinity is not a singular phenomenon. It varies between and within groups of men, according to factors such as class, race, ethnicity, education, and sexuality. These different masculinities are themselves in conflict, with some being valued more highly than others. Dominant masculinity is that form which is most highly valued in a particular society, and which has established a position of dominance over other competing masculinities. In our society, dominant masculinity is still predominantly white, middle-class and heterosexual.

There are two major threads of *dominant masculine culture* that need to be understood within male dominated contexts; group behaviour, and rituals of inclusion and exclusion. From an early age boys are taught what it means to be masculine through participation in groups. Masculine rules of behaviour are maintained primarily by men within specific group contexts. Loyalty to the group is of prime importance, and it is defined largely in terms of hostility to outsiders or competitors. Fathers, older brothers, uncles, sports coaches, scout masters and disciplinarian teachers 'toughen boys up' to survive in a harsh world, while groups of boys often turn on those who are different, and promote a culture of not standing out from the crowd.

Collective male behaviour can be understood in terms of rituals, designed to demonstrate and enforce adherence to the rules. These rituals make it clear who belongs and who does not. Binge drinking in groups, risk taking, misbehaving and joking are some of the most important of these masculine bonding rituals (Connell 2001). Around the world of firefighting, joking forms a common thread in the interactions between firefighters.

1.5. Joking at work

Joking is a very important aspect of masculine rituals of belonging, and a major way of defining who belongs to the 'in-group' and who is excluded. Joking is also an important Australian pattern of relating for both women and men. Whilst there are many styles of joking, there has been considerable analysis of the masculine sense of belonging that can be created by shared ridicule of the excluded group. Sexualised and sexist jokes can often emphasise that women are inferior and do not really belong. Homophobic jokes make clear the limits on male intimacy, and are directed at men who do not conform to masculine heterosexual standards in a whole range of ways. Racist jokes recreate ethnocentric notions of white superiority and multicultural inferiority. This type of male bonding is thus largely based on shared jokes at the expense of women, homosexuals, and people from non-English speaking backgrounds. These jokes have the effect of underlining the inferiority of the 'out-group'. The expression 'it's just a joke' is regularly used to gloss over harassment and abuse perpetrated on those who do not belong. Joking was observed in most research contexts and was often used to convey approval or disapproval.

Joking is also used to actively demonstrate allegiance to the group, and to enforce adherence to its rules. Participating in making jokes and laughing at them is one of the ways we all create social indicators of inclusion and exclusion. To ignore a joke made at your expense, even though it makes you feel hurt or angry, is to show strength or coolness, the two primary masculine ideals of the group (Lyman 1987). If you can't take a joke, you are definitely not cool, and you certainly don't belong. Subjecting men or women seeking to be a member of the male group to systematic ridicule through 'put downs' and 'bagging' is an effective way of teaching them to control their emotions - one of the primary values of dominant masculinity. This type of joking allows a form of intimacy to develop, which does not threaten the masculine taboos against the more feminine attributes of self-revelation, softness or sensitivity. For this reason, male group jokes frequently target homosexuality and women to draw a clear line between acceptable and unacceptable forms of intimacy.

1.6. Gender at work

Gender is also fundamental to the way work is organised. Whilst the sexual divisions of labour are obvious in our society, the way gender operates in organisational life to code certain jobs and roles within jobs as more suited to women or men is less obvious. Jobs such as firefighting are not inherently female or male: we socially and organisationally shape them as feminine or masculine. The historical example of Rosie the Riveter (Colman 1995) is important here where mechanical jobs were handed over to women through adversity during the Second World War and women competently performed in these previously gender coded occupations. These jobs were redefined as masculine again after the war. Similarly women operated very successfully as firefighters in London during 'the blitz' and were afforded the same status as 'public heroes' at the time.

Firefighting has been socially and organisationally shaped over time as male. Reconstructing the firefighter job now as more gender neutral is complex and not straight forward: the term cultural change is now used to designate this organisational challenge in relation to gender reform. Change will not be brought about only by project-based initiatives. Firefighting is a classic example of a job that has been socially shaped as male simply because firefighters in

Melbourne until 1988 were all male and the majority are still male. How organisations 'unpack' this social and organisational shaping and reconstruct these jobs as gender balanced is complex and not a simple or straightforward process. As gender is also about power in our society any change in the organisation of work around gender and power creates anxiety and even resistance that can take many forms.

1.7. The field of gender and male dominated occupations

Women firefighters are now employed widely around the world but their proportions remain low unless there are very long term planning and program level initiatives by fire services. There are many reasons cited in the fire service literature but the most common factors identified are that the male dominated culture and image is critical (Cockburn 1981, Eveline 1995, Bacchi, 1994), women are less likely to express interest in fire fighting (Shuttleworth 2001, Richards 1996, Bucke 1994) and women generally do not perform as well as men on the physical tests required for selection (Elliot, 2001). Analysing or critiquing any gender biases in the physical aptitude tests have become very political and counter to traditional views of the importance of 'maintaining the standards'. Any discussion of change can be reduced to a simplistic attempt to 'lower the standards' and seemingly threaten the deeply held identity of the firefighter. Not many fire services seem to have undertaken or published any gender analyses on the physical aptitude tests. In the UK, the contested nature of the physical aptitude issue has been demonstrated by the long overdue national report on the review of recruitment and selection process.

The literature reveals the obvious about increasing the participation of women in fire services: no fire services have increased the participation of women without concerted efforts. The peak levels of participation of women firefighters in fire services around the world are 15% in some US agencies (see section 1. 2) where intensive recruitment and retention programs have operated for 10 to 20 years (US Women in the Fire Service, 2001). There is also acceptance within the firefighting literature of the need for major changes in the culture of fire services as part of these efforts for more gender balance (ODPM 1999, Baigent 2001, Baigent 2003, McGill 2002, Armstrong et al 1993).

Studies of women in male dominated occupations have shown that change initiatives must begin from a deep understanding of the extent to which members define the occupation with masculine characteristics which then lend a form of occupational masculinity to the workplace (Cockburn 1981, Eveline 1995, Bryson 1994). The dominant discourse in other male dominated occupations is characterised by the formation and maintenance of the group (McLean et al 1997 Connell 1995). Here the core group sets the norms and determines who and what is acceptable or not. To be a fully accepted member of the dominant group in these masculine groups, one must be Anglo, male, and heterosexual. The cohesiveness of the group in these contexts is often exercised through the culture of joking, a high incidence of put-downs, and attendance at drinking or sporting rituals.

Around the world, both men and women describe firefighting services as masculine, very hierarchical, locked in the past and very resistant to change (Baigent 2001, ODPM, 1999). Most fire services understandably have hero status in the eyes of the public and the government. While this is justly earned and maintained, it creates a sense of immunity from

public scrutiny or criticism. In particular, it can limit reflection of how firefighting cultures have been slow to include the social changes taking place in the broader society and workplaces.

One way to understand women's experience in the firefighting culture is through the concept of tokens and dominants developed in the classic work on 'Men and Women of the Corporation' (Kantor1977).

Ratio of men to women	Effect on the women?
99:1 to 85:15	Men are dominant and women become tokens and are treated as representatives of their social category as women – or symbols of their sex rather than individuals. Here the action of any woman gets generalised to all women.
85:15 to 60:40	Women are still minorities and men dominant in determining the culture but women now have more power than as tokens and able to influence group culture and be seen as individuals as well as members of a group.

Tokens face the limelight simply because they are different and stand out from the dominant group. Being a token, as women are in fire services, makes women paradoxically both invisible and extra visible: invisible because dominants will express solidarity against the outsider and consequently diminish their presence and highly visible as one of the few women.

As tokens, women may be excluded from informal networks or, on a more subtle level, be challenged to show a sense of humour by accepting jokes at the expense of their sex. For example, women firefighters can be subjected to group putdowns: they are seen as incompetent firefighters; their recruitment is favouritism; they have lowered standards. Worst of all, women's behaviour can be seen as representative of their social category as women: in this way, all women are labelled incompetent.

There are few options for 'cultural' survival available to female firefighters and this theoretical work draws on frameworks in other male dominated cultures. For a woman firefighter and indeed for a female in any male dominated setting, there are few choices about how to be and how to behave. The characteristics, rules and behaviour of such a culture are so strongly maintained that to not take account of them in some way makes it extremely difficult to function comfortably, or even successfully, in this setting. For example an Australian study of women in undergraduate engineering found three main ways in which women responded to the masculine culture of engineering (McLean et al, 1997):

Become 'one of the guys'

The first and safest response available to women is to merge with the males through mimicking male behaviour - becoming 'one of the boys' and hence more invisible as a female. This response involves outwardly accepting and enthusiastically participating in the culture of the dominant male group and gaining status through acceptance as 'one of the boys' or 'one of the guys'. The capacity of women to be 'one of the guys' is often stated by both women and men as the way to define the acceptability or otherwise of a particular woman, and being like one of the guys was commonly accepted as a survival

mechanism for women. These women often laugh at male jokes and do not question traditional male behaviour. This appears to be the most common response of women in engineering and the most acceptable one. It still does not result in complete acceptance or membership of the dominant group since full membership is dependant on being male.

Traditional Femininity

Another response available to women in engineering is the traditional female gender role which reinstates a conventional heterosexual male-female relationship as characterised by the dress and image of the excessively feminine and/or the supportive and compliant female helper. This position is also non-threatening to the male group because the traditional terms of femininity mean that the women are no competition or challenge to the dominant male group. Some women dress in an ultra-feminine way and in doing so clearly reject the move to merge in and become 'one of the guys'.

Objectors to the culture

The third possible response for women in male dominated settings is the main point of resistance to the dominant culture and this is expressed as verbally objecting to traditional ways of doing things. This position is the ultimate threat to the dominant males (usually Anglo) because it challenges and questions all their assumptions and threatens to undermine their social power.

There is a very real sense in which the standards of behaviour appropriate for women in male dominated cultures are determined by group male behaviour: women are judged according to their participation in, or response to, traditional male behaviours such as joking and sport and drinking. Much but not all of this group male behaviour is anti-women in its content and effect.

The study of other male dominated cultures would suggest that for a female in such male dominated settings, there are few choices about how to be and how to behave. The characteristics, rules and behaviour of such a culture are so strongly maintained that to not take account of them in some way makes it extremely difficult to function comfortably, or even successfully, in this setting.

1.8. Gender linked differences in style

How do women and men differ in the way they interact and their use of power? There are many ways in which we all stereotype the differences and similarities between women and men. There are many frames in the literature about gender-linked preferences in styles and values but a useful matrix appears in Cornelius (1998) and is summarised below. Cornelius developed this matrix out of extensive workplace research in Australia to illuminate more understanding about what women and men most frequently disagree about in the workplace. Cornelius (1998) emphasises that these values are not mutually exclusive.

Perspectives	Feminine Stereotype	Masculine stereotype
Use of power	Equality: prefer to share power with others rather than use power over them – create a level playing field.	Status: shouldering responsibility and measure status by output, position, resources or strength.
Interacting style	Agreement: emphasise similarities and common ground - keep the peace.	Competition: enjoy the challenge of competitive strategies- accept some aggression as part of the 'rough and tumble'
Focus of attention	Feeling: believe the feelings, and sometimes intuition or creativity are what really matter.	Actions and objects: focus on the external world and happiest when doing tasks.
Comfort zone	Interdependence: believe we don't get anywhere alone nor do we have to – see people as a resource.	Autonomy: aim to be an independent, powerful contributor to the organization – make tough decisions.

This research by Cornelius has collated tendencies only and many women and men will be more likely to hold values more usual of the opposite sex. This matrix means that women often tend to give higher priority to equality and sharing power with others rather than using power over them. Men however are more likely to measure status by output, position, resources or strength. Women are also seeking to emphasise similarities and common ground more often than men, whilst men enjoy the challenge of competitive strategies. Women however are more likely to orient to and value the internal world of emotion and tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty whilst men focus on the external world or the world of ideas and are happiest when dealing with actions and objects. Women are more in their comfort zone through the collective group activity and seeing people as a resource for support, information and advice. Men however are more comfortable being an autonomous, independent powerful contributor to an organisation.

This matrix, as Cornelius (1998) states, is not presented as fact but as hypotheses that help in unscrambling feminine and masculine styles and also appear in different ways whenever gender is researched in our Anglo Celtic society. This matrix is only about tendencies and the context is critical – when people are stressed such as when in a conflict situation they tend to polarise and move to extremes. Hence women and men can move to more stereotypically feminine or masculine styles when stressed – or the opposite depending on their background experiences.

It is useful to consider what the effect would be for an organisation if the masculine was far more highly valued than the feminine using this matrix. The more masculine attributes on the right hand side of the table would be far more evident in the way an organisation undertakes tasks. A gender-balanced organisation, in contrast, would value both the feminine and the masculine.

1.9. Gender and organisational culture

The term culture refers to a set of beliefs and practices that are found in the behaviour of work or social groups and which act to allow that group to function and reproduce itself. The fire fighting culture exists and reproduces itself and has done for over 100 years. Whilst there have been changes in structure and personnel over the century these changes in personnel have not meant the end of the culture. The fire fighting culture has continued by ensuring that those who join the organisation are made aware of 'how things are done around here'. This awareness is both at the conscious and the assumption levels. The conscious level is readily accessed through interview and questionnaires but the assumption level can be so obvious and taken for granted that it is usually less easily expressed. These levels are 'known' but not often stated by members of an organisation.

Most of the cultural reproduction processes over time appear to have relied more on *assimilation* and less on *accommodation*. *Assimilation* is the process whereby a person who joins the group changes their beliefs and actions to fit those of the group. *Accommodation* however is the process whereby a group changes its beliefs and actions to fit those of a person who joins the group. Women and men are not the same when they arrive as a recruit in a fire service - we know that as a *group* women and men have different social construction to use jargon outlined above - different background knowledge and experiences as women and men in our society.

Most fire services in English speaking countries have a very distinct and masculine culture and have historically developed mechanisms whereby new recruits are actively assimilated into this culture. This currently leaves women and people from other cultural backgrounds having to fit into a white Anglo male defined culture that operates at many taken for granted levels. This can create difficulties. For example, at present in the UK operational women are judged against male behaviour and their peers measure any definitions of competency and capability by this standard (Baigent 2001). As one woman said in this MFB research project 'the only time you are treated the same is when you have your tunic on at the fire ground and they cannot tell who you are'. As a woman firefighter you either find a way to measure up as an honorary man or you are history.

The literature is full of the consistent differences that have been found in the perceptions of women and men surrounding organisational life and the existence of gendered patterns of discrimination within these organisations. Women experience hostility towards women whereas men do not (Burgess 1996). Women feel unsupported and at a career disadvantage compared with men whereas men within the same organisation think women are supported in their careers (Still 1997).

Section 2. Gender Issues in Firefighter Culture

2.1. Masculinity and fire service culture

The culture of the fire service in the UK is described as very masculine, very hierarchical, locked in the past and very resistant to change (Baigent 2001, ODPM 1999). The characteristics of this masculine culture have been identified in the UK through an intensive research project by Dave Baigent, an operational firefighter turned academic post retirement from the UK fire service (Baigent 2001). His findings show that interactions between firefighters are characterised by:

- putting down and paying out anyone different that lands in a fire station
- ostracising firefighters who do not conform to the dominant group
- bullying and threatening anyone who disagrees with the dominant group
- enforcing the rituals of inclusion and exclusion that perpetuate the masculine culture in the fire stations which in turn determines who is included and who is in effect excluded from full participation in fire station life
- the role of 'jokes and humour' as an 'innocent' instrument of the male group culture .

Overwhelmingly the culture conveyed was one where the primacy of masculine values, attributes and attitudes such as physical strength and courage, 'demand and survive' ethos, emphasis on emotional distance, certainty and the achievement of goals were emphasised. (Baigent 2001). Such a situation leads to a lack of gender balance both at the broad cultural level and in terms of the leadership models and the 'template' operating. The organisational challenge embedded in this form of masculinity is that the more feminine attributes of communication, emotional responses, feelings, uncertainty, negotiation, empathy are not equally valued alongside these in balance. The more stereotypical feminine attributes were putdown and avoided at all costs, eg. jokes about 'being a girl', 'cry-babies' (Baigent 2001).

In Baigent's study, the dominant form of masculinity in firefighting is characterised by the formation and maintenance of the group. The core group sets the norms and determines who and what behaviour is acceptable or not. To be a fully accepted member of the dominant group in firefighting, one must be Anglo, male, and heterosexual. The cohesiveness of the group is exercised through the culture of joking, a high incidence of put-downs, and attendance at drinking or sporting rituals. Again there is a very real sense in which the standards of behaviour appropriate for women are determined by group male behaviour - females are judged according to their participation in, or response to, traditional male behaviours such as joking. Much, but not all of this group masculine behaviour, is anti-women in its content and effect (Baigent 2001).

These UK findings were supported by both the operational women and men interviewed in the MFB research. The parallels reported were striking. These views were expressed alongside the many positives of firefighter life but have never the less impacted on the lives of both women and men who have not 'fitted-in' at various stages of their careers.

2.2. A culture of bullying and putting down difference

The experience of being 'different' and working in a station can still be harrowing in many places in the world and there were reports from a few Melbourne stations that parallel these findings – for both women and men. The putdown and disdain for women as firefighters that some women report having to endure is just as problematic. Studies have reported the prevalence of 'firemen' who think 'women are useless' and let them know this on a daily basis. Some firemen complain because they 'don't want a woman backing them up in a fire 'cos they can't carry me out' and 'they are taking a fire fighting job from my son or nephew'. Individuals still report being treated differently in fire stations and have to constantly navigate their way through being identified as different on a daily basis (WFS 2004, Baigent 1999). They have more pressure to conform to their peers and become 'one of the guys' as this is the safest position to occupy in the workplace. Bullying is reflective of the culture of many fire services with women experiencing 'difference' due to their visibility.

Extensive workplace bullying has been identified in other traditional fire services around the world (Baigent 2001, Archer 1998, Yoder and Aniakudo 1997). Firefighters in this context are bullied to conform and remain 'in the group' and are ostracised if they have any behaviour or views at variance from the dominant group of firefighters. The experience of bullying reported in the US by black women firefighters highlights why these issues need to be dealt with in a new management paradigm (Yoder and Aniakudo 1997). Clearly men have been reported as the targets of bullying as well as women but again the focus of bullying is 'difference'. This difference can be gender, indigeneity, cultural background, disability, sexuality or even physical attributes.

2.3. Raising gender in mostly male contexts

Gender issues are traditionally difficult to raise and discuss in male dominated workplaces around the world. Raising gender issues can result in gender myths and stereotypes quickly developing and defensiveness overtaking any informed discussion. Historically, some of the organisational issues for male dominated organisations have simply been their low numbers of women: there were no women fire-fighters who carried the second wave feminist demands and reforms in the 1980's and 1990's on the inside of the fire service profession (Bacchi 2000, Eveline 2001). There were no women in the MFB operational ranks until 1989 so there were no gender reform pressures from the operational side of the MFB or other metropolitan fire services in Australia. Interestingly the occupations that were slow to increase their numbers of women are now seeking to develop gender leadership with their senior male managers.

Simply raising gender issues organisationally can make life very difficult for the few women within the organisation. When women are treated as 'tokens' they are indeed not individual firefighters but representatives of their sex: consequently women firefighters 'collect' all the comments about women or gender over every issue. They unintentionally become the problem. This is why women get annoyed when the MFB make any changes that are even remotely connected to any gender issues.

2.4. Jokes elevate stereotypical masculine culture

Dave Baigent's research in the UK documented the multiple ways that occupational masculinity operates in fire fighting cultures in the UK (Baigent 2001, Baigent 2003). One of the most pervasive was the elevation of stereotypical masculine characteristics to higher status than stereotypically female characteristics. Feminine values and characteristics are typically disparaged either directly or indirectly usually in the form of jokes that reflect this hierarchy. For example, jokes heard in the MFB research commonly putdown or trivialise attributes or behaviour that are different:

- crying, showing emotions, or anything associate with being feminine such as less upper body strength
- homosexuality
- thinking you know anything about anything
- asking particular questions that may have an underlying questioning of 'how things are done'
- and anything serious in relation to emotions eg recovering or finding dead bodies.

Of course there are also very serious emotional and thoughtful responses to these situations as well and it should be stated that in situations such as debriefs after critical incidents, many men and women of course demonstrate very appropriate emotional behaviour.

The clear outcome of joking is to make sure you did not repeat the behaviour in the group. Joking in male dominated cultures is a powerful tool for making it clear whose behaviour is unacceptable (McLean et al, 1995) and this operates quickly in induction training contexts where the group is forming. The joking often draws on stereotypes to categorise and denigrate particular people or groups and, as observed, the target for many jokes are women or behaviour associated with being feminine in stereotype terms. This emphasises the theory discussed earlier where masculine attributes are elevated and feminine attributes denigrated on a regular basis. There was much evidence throughout the research indicating that many participants felt undervalued and not respected as individuals.

Many firefighters were irritated and annoyed about the way they are putdown by other firefighters and this begins in training where other recruits also adopt group patterns of behaviour. Women, anyone perceived as homosexual or even emotional are the butt of jokes. This phenomenon has to be understood by all in the fire service through the cumulative cultural effect rather than the individual remark or putdown. This is a daily drip where each comment accumulates into a continual climate about your difference and the constant battle to maintain self esteem and feel accepted. As discussed earlier women have very few options about how to behave on the masculine dominated training ground. They have few options other than to seek invisibility and merge with their male counterparts and 'become one of the guys'.

2.5. 'We treat everyone the same'

'We treat everyone the same' is a common statement in male dominated contexts. This statement reveals part of a wider problem in fire services generally and shows a lack of understanding of equality and diversity issues and their management within the culture. The

conflation of 'everyone is equal' and 'we treat everyone the same' is one example of the lack of training and understanding of equality and fairness issues within the organisation. Despite the data and research outcomes indicating otherwise, popular myths within the organization ('we treat everyone the same') persist and get drawn on to justify the status quo. There needs to be a shift to outcomes to measure equity and diversity issues in the Brigade and more training and expertise generated within the organization to counteract these ignorance based assertions.

Equality can be interpreted as meaning the same standards and the same treatment for all but what is not as clearly understood or articulated in these contexts is that the standard is covertly male defined and measured. The weight of accommodation is on the women to adjust to the male standard or else be judged as inferior. Firefighters unintentionally treat women as men under the guise of 'we treat everyone the same'. This contradiction needs to be addressed by fire services around the world. When the template is hidden as male then 'treating everyone the same means *treating everyone as a man*. This creates part of the complex set of challenges that are different for women within the MFB compared with men.

The term 'gender blind' has been used in the literature to describe treating everyone the same as if their sex or cultural background does not count in organisational policies and processes. In male dominated organisations this has traditionally meant imposing male standards onto women. The level playing field does not exist for women and men in male dominated organisations. Masculine values and ways of doing things accumulate to the systemic level where the organisational culture creates a set of conditions where men feel more comfortable than women in organisational contexts such as meetings, decision making, contributing ideas, and definitions of success. Alternatively the term gender neutral refers to the process of ensuring that male standards are not imposed on women or by women on men. Gender neutral policies and processes sets the challenge for an organisation such as the MFB to accommodate the different experiences, capabilities and styles of women and men without essentialising the feminine and masculine stereotypes.

The term gender balanced has been utilised in this research rather than gender neutral as many argue that gender neutrality is not possible as it implies that we can in fact treat women and men as not gendered. Contemporary research says this is not possible or realistic and the preferable framework is to have an organisation that balances the feminine and masculine both individually and organisationally.

Equal treatment does not lead to equal outcomes. Treating women and men the same is not the same as treating women and men equally. In an organisation where men are treated as the norm such as firefighting, you have to treat women and men differently in order to treat them equally in this context.

2.6. Sexual harassment and abuse

The issue of sexual harassment and sexual abuse was not surveyed in this MFB research project or elsewhere in Australia so far. However, overseas data on this issue where it has been investigated are concerning. The Women in the Fire Service in the US undertook an independent study in 1995 (www.wfsi.org) of 551 women in fire departments across the US and their results point to the need for the MFB to have proper procedures in place such as women as trainers on all future recruit training courses. The US survey listed eight areas of overt sexual harassment and asked women to indicate their experience with each unwanted behavior including how often they had experienced it and whether the behavior had occurred only in the past or was happening at the time of the survey.

Only 64 women, or 12% of respondents, reported they had never experienced sexual harassment. Thus, 487 women or 88% of fire service women responding, had experienced some form of sexual harassment at some point in their fire service careers or volunteer time. Twenty-two percent of the women who reported one or more types of harassment said the harassment had occurred only in the past, which means nearly 70% of the women in the survey were experiencing ongoing harassment. One third of the women harassed (33%), or 29% of the women responding to the survey, reported requests or demands for sexual favors from co-workers or supervisors. More than two-thirds of the women (71%) reported the behavior had happened more than once (www.wfsi.org).

Whilst the issue of sexual harassment was not researched specifically in this project, the pervasiveness of sexual harassment in other fire services indicates the importance of appropriate policies and procedures in place. The difficulty of women reporting incidents also needs to be placed alongside these data.

2.7. The experience of women firefighters

There have been a number of reports on the issues confronting women entering fire services as well as strategies to attract women into fire services around the world (Susan Couling, 2002 report for NSWFB, Kaplen 2002 on a UK and US comparison, the US based Women in the Fire Service organisation and website (<http://www.wfsi.org/>)). There are a number of common threads to these reports and there is a useful summary listed by the WFS in the US. The main obstacles are listed as resistance from some elements of the workforce, the institutional 'barriers', the effects of the male firefighting tradition and of societal beliefs about women and men, and what the WFS term the 'obstacles that are not gender-specific that all firefighters face' (WFS 2004).

Resistance from some elements of the workforce include:

- Sexual harassment and other hostile behavior based on gender
- Skepticism about women's competence as firefighters
- Emotional attachment to an all-male work environment
- Uncertainty over behavioral expectations in a mixed-gender workforce

- Perceived threat to self-image (i.e. being a firefighter does not bolster one's manhood if women can do it)
- Distrust of women's motivation for becoming firefighters

Institutional barriers include:

- Fire stations built to accommodate only one sex in sleeping, bathing, restroom and changing facilities
- Inadequate policies regarding firefighter pregnancy and reproductive safety, and inadequate information about the risks of firefighting to pregnancy
- Hair and grooming policies based on men's styles and needs
- Protective gear and uniforms designed to fit men, not women
- Lack of child-care options for workers on 24-hour shifts

Effects of the male firefighting tradition and of societal beliefs about women and men include:

- Women may not believe they can be competent firefighters
- Women may not have the support of their spouse/partner in pursuing a fire service career
- Perceived conflict between a woman's self-image as a woman and her work as a firefighter
- Discomfort with the "pioneer" role (i.e., many women who would like to be firefighters don't want to be the first women on the job or the only woman in their fire station)
- Distrust of the fire service's motivation for hiring women and what level of real support will be provided in the long run
- Lack of public support for women's presence in the fire service, based on a general perception that women can not do the job and are just being hired because of "affirmative action"

Obstacles that are not gender-specific that all firefighters face include:

- Physically demanding and dangerous occupation
- High level of stress due to exposure to trauma and tragedy
- Work schedule requiring nights and weekends away from home
- Sleep deprivation due to work schedule and stress

Some fire services around the world recommend and action 'women-only' recruitment strategies and physical aptitude training (London, Toronto, New Zealand, United States). In some situations this has led to a backlash from the women as well as the men (see fuller

discussion in Paper 2). The London Fire Brigade (LFB) response to the resistance of women firefighters to women-only strategies was to 'do it anyway' and work on the cultural change that will make it easier for women to raise these issues in the future without being the target of putdowns.

2.8. The experience of corporate women in fire services

There has been little research on the experiences of women in the corporate and administrative components of fire services around the world. It is important to separate and understand the different and similar pressures experienced by women that work alongside operational firefighters. Corporate women locally feel as if they are told in multiple ways that they are not valued and do not have a future in the MFB. They feel as if they are treated as 'transit lounge' or 'second class' employees relative to operational staff and many have been advised to 'move on' from the MFB for their career development.

The dominant cultural view is that female corporate women are here for a short time and that you have to move on for your future employment prospects. In short 'there are no careers here for non-uniformed women'. The bigger picture for many of these women is that they are not taken seriously as professionals and that they are either treated with a paternalistic attitude or worse patronised and rendered invisible. They frequently consider that their professional skills are not always recognised or valued alongside firefighter skills.

Some of the reported management styles referred to earlier as 'command and control' are outdated and belong to an old paradigm no longer regarded as useful in people management. The excessive importance that is placed on rank and uniform can and often does make life difficult for those who are outside the rank and command system on the fireground. Corporate staff have a double jeopardy in organisational terms in working in this environment that privileges both operational roles and masculinity over corporate roles and femininity.

Section 3. Three: Summary of Local MFB Findings

Historically firefighting in the MFB is a highly masculine culture and is characterised by a command and control authority style which operates both on and off the fireground and spills over into non-emergency interactions where it becomes problematic. Numerous contradictions to this command and control were anecdotally described by men in particular making this picture a complex one.

There are a number of powerful myths surrounding the discussion of gender issues in the MFB and some of these are 'women are treated the same', 'a woman can't carry you out of a fire', 'they are taking a job from my son or nephew', 'women are lowering the standards', 'never dob on your mates' and 'it's just a joke'.

A culture of bullying and coercion is reportedly normalised in many but not all firefighter and firefighter/management interaction.

On the whole, firefighters articulated that the culture of the group was not something that needed to be questioned. 'First tell us what the problem is' was a common conversation starter. This reveals part of a broader lack of understanding about the management of gender and cultural issues within the MFB.

Many firefighters expressed the view that women firefighters had to learn to put up with the treatment they received or they were not up to the job. Again this shows a lack of understanding and training about gender equity issues and their management.

In summary the issues for women that need to be understood and integrated into all recruitment and marketing strategies are that women firefighters:

- are paradoxically both invisible and extra visible when they want to be neither
- are challenged to show a sense of humour by accepting anti-women jokes; to do otherwise is to suffer worse hyper-visibility as women
- cannot complain about their treatment or they will draw attention to themselves which produces a new round of putdowns and marginalisation (for example, taking pornography down is blamed on women complaining, not on the legislation that makes it illegal)
- behaviour is seen as representative of their social category as women rather than themselves as an individual
- have to work hard to have their achievements noted or acknowledged
- visibility renders women reluctant to put themselves forward for management development knowing they will be the subject of even more scrutiny
- either find a way to measure up as an honorary man or they can become outcasts in many fire stations.

Section 4. Recommendations

4.1. Changing the culture not the women

Firefighting is defined and redefined around the world as a job characterised by the skills men are perceived as having and women are normalised as lacking in the job. The script for the successful firefighter has been reiterated many times in other studies as well as here in Melbourne (WFS 2004, Baigent 2001, Bucke 1995). All these stories share the central theme of women lacking whatever is needed to do the job (Eveline 1998). Most of the stories identify women as the problem and consequently leave men with the binary opposite – the advantage. This discourse within the MFB and indeed in fire services worldwide, actually reinforce what institutions do to perpetuate the patterns of social inequality justified by ignorance. These stories will need to be one of the sites of action as it is here that - however unintentionally - men's behaviour is normalised and women remain the problem to be solved. Interestingly, the firefighting culture has not been influenced by changing technology and tactics as we move into the future. These changes are continuously reducing the need for brute strength to 'get the job done'.

Firefighting is one of the most sex-segregated professions in the world of work and the task of developing a more gender-balanced fire service is at the core of the challenges coming out of this study. Firefighting has been marked as men's work and hence describing the problem itself becomes problematic.

The repetitive stories that surround firefighting are useful to reconsider here; firefighters as heroes and strong, firefighting as fitting in, firefighting as protecting your patch, and firefighting as 'carrying out your mates' from a fire. The repetitive stories about women firefighters are also illustrative: women firefighters have lowered the standards, women firefighters are only successful because the government is preferentially employing them, women are blamed for changes in language and pornography, women threaten the way things have been done.

The only way that women have any chance for 'success' within this paradigm is to display the criteria for the stereotype male successful firefighter. As one of the women stated, 'the best way to fit in to be one of the guys'. This has to include rejection of anything that marks a woman as different from the men. Hence identifying with anything to do with women and the quest by the MFB to increase the equal participation of women becomes instantly problematic for anyone employed in the organisation. The situation for anyone who has the role on the inside to achieve this objective is even more problematic.

The issue underpinning the MFB change agenda is how to change the relationship between 'men's work' and 'women's work'. Research tells us that women's work is consistently undervalued relative to men's while the division between the two is continually reinstated. Researchers also point out that the undervaluing of women's work can also be described as the overvaluing of men's skills, jobs and productivity in comparison with women (Cockburn and Ormrod, 1993). The history of women entering the non-traditional sector is one of protecting the image of men's work whilst devaluing the efforts of women who enter them.

The common outcome of the stories within the MFB is to displace the explanation for women's under representation onto women themselves (Eveline, 1998).

These frameworks also explain why women who act like men are held in such high esteem within the organisation – and rightly so. If women undertake firefighting the same way as men then they gain legitimacy AND the norms for firefighting remain unchallenged and the corollary discussion of male advantage remains unaddressed.

The following recommendations have been designed around the international and local findings as well as the advice from a two-week information gathering tour in the UK in late 2003 (See Project Reports). For each of these key recommendations, there are a series of key actions required with target dates, people accountable and success indicators listed in the 2005 Implementation Plan. These form Year 1 of the MFB Gender Equity Five Year Framework currently being implemented (see Gender Equity Implementation Plan for 2005).

4.2. Leadership and accountability

Key recommendations:

- 1 The gendered culture of the MFB will be the focus of change arising from the Gender Research Report
- 2 The gender change strategy outlined below will be directed by the MFB CEO, managed by the Director Human Resources and co-ordinated through the manager of an 'Equity and Diversity Unit'
- 3 The gender change strategy will require the establishment of a dedicated and resourced 'Equity and Diversity Unit'.
- 4 Leadership for the gender change strategy will be proactive, consistent, visible and unambiguously by example by all senior managers both uniformed and corporate
- 5 Key leadership for the implementation of the gender change strategy will be the formation of a Leadership group made up of senior uniformed Directors
- 6 The focus of change in Year One will be operational with an emphasis on education and professional development (July 1 2004 -June 30 2005)
- 7 The gender change strategy to be internally monitored by the MFB Board, the continuation of the Gender Equity Management Committee and through reports from the CEO and DHR
- 8 An equity and diversity policy review will be undertaken in relation to strengthening the policy framework underpinning this gender change strategy and streamlining linkages between gender report findings and EEO, bullying and harassment complaints and reporting (for inclusion in 'Gender Report Card')
- 9 The change strategy will be reviewed and adjusted annually by a high profile Equity Review Panel of Board members, CEO, senior internal managers responsible for the implementation.

- 10 An annual Gender Equity Review process will be established to form an annual 'Report Card' and document the data and the cultural change progress for the Equity Review Panel. A formal report of this annual Gender Equity review process will be submitted to the MFB Board each year.

4.3. Organisational development

Key recommendations

- 1 Establish a team of fully qualified and accredited professional developers within the Equity and Diversity Unit preferably with experience of fire service culture
- 2 Establish an in-house gender equity professional development program for the provision of training for all MFB personnel on current and emerging gender and diversity issues
- 3 Discontinue the practice of using external providers for 'generic' equity and diversity training to operational areas except for specialist culture- specific research and development
- 4 Establish, train and support the Outreach Team (of women firefighters) to implement the Marketing to Women strategy
- 5 Conduct an annual feedback event with women firefighters to assess cultural change through the Gender Equity Framework Implementation.
- 6 Implement a range of women sensitive policies and practices as outlined in the conference report of women firefighters (May 2003).

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