

'Milestone' hailed as women achieve parity on Victorian government boards

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Melissa Davey

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Women have achieved parity in paid positions on Victorian government boards for the first time in the state's history.

The minister for women, Fiona Richardson, said on Tuesday women now hold 50% of state government board positions, which she said was proof setting targets worked.



"This is incredibly significant," she said.



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"It's the first time it's happened in Victoria. It's a significant milestone for women. It also demonstrates that setting targets actually works. Now we've known this for some time, and other countries around the world have seen the success of the implementation of targets. But here in Victoria, achieving this milestone in just two years is very significant indeed."

In 2015 the premier, Daniel Andrews, said the number of women in paid positions on government boards had fallen to 36%, a figure which he said was not good enough. He made government ministers responsible for ensuring parity was reached for paid positions on all government boards.

Public Transport Victoria, the Treasury Corporation and the Country Fire Authority are examples of some of the largest public boards in the state.

Richardson called on the private sector to set similar targets, saying improving diversity on boards increased profitability and led to better, more inclusive decisions.

Companies were not setting diversity targets “out of the goodness of their hearts”, she said, but because it boosted company performance.

After the government targets were introduced, Belinda Duarte, a Wotjobaluk woman, was appointed to the board of the Wheeler Centre, a cultural organisation supported by the state government and which holds public talks and events. She is also the CEO of Culture is Life, a not-for-profit organisation committed to the prevention of Aboriginal youth suicide, is co-chair of Reconciliation Victoria, and is on the board of the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation.



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Duarte praised the government for achieving parity, saying it sent a strong message to young girls that there were opportunities to look forward to.

“I’m excited about what we can do to ensure the diverse voices of women are embedded across our organisations,” she said.

“What I’m looking forward to is making sure we now have that representation across corporate industry and business.”

Earlier this month, the Victorian government announced \$550,000 in funding to promote gender equality in grassroots sporting clubs across the state.

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