



**GOVERNMENT**

# Women leading by example

**B**ridging the gender divide at the top of Australian organisations is still very much a work in progress.

Comments by Governor-General Quentin Bryce on International Women's Day reignited arguments that a quota system was needed to increase the number of women on company boards.

Under-representation is an issue not only in the private sector. Despite Julia Gillard leading the Australian government, female members of federal and state parliaments are significantly outnumbered by their male counterparts. In Victorian local government, less than 30 per cent of councillors are women.

Although more than 60 per cent of the Victorian local government workforce is female, only 20 per cent of senior managers and 12 of the 79 chief executives are women.

One of them is Boroondara chief executive Catherine Dale and her example has encouraged women on her staff to commit to professional development and advancing their careers.

The senior co-ordinator ageing and disability services at the council, Genevieve Moloney, completed the LGPro Emerging Leaders program last year and her colleague, Amy Goulding, the council's communications and engagement officer, is following in her footsteps as a member of the peak body's program this year.

Moloney, who shared the LGPro

Young Achiever Award in 2010 with Swan Hill Rural City Council youth support officer Kane Sparks, believes professional and personal development should be ongoing.

"It's very important to keep learning, developing and exhibiting best practice," she says. "I've done a number of courses and been involved in the Local Government Management Challenge. Because I was new to local government, the challenge [run annually by Local Government Managers Australia] and the Emerging Leaders program were great ways to understand more about the range of services the sector offers.

"Meeting other people, with a variety of leadership styles and from different service areas, gets you thinking beyond your immediate role and area of expertise."

Trained as an occupational therapist, Moloney worked in hospitals in Australia, England and Wales before joining the staff at Boroondara in 2007.

"I started as a team leader and then moved into a hospital admission risk program run by St Vincent's and Boroondara Council," she says. "I then acted in the co-ordinator of assessment and home support role for 18 months and moved into my present position in April last year.

"There's a huge responsibility in having staff reporting to me but I really enjoy working with people."

Her job involves supervising about 200 staff and about

100 volunteers and she is responsible for a range of services for older residents and people with disabilities. It's an important role in a municipality that has Victoria's largest population of residents aged 85 and up.

Moloney and Goulding see professional development as a way to hone generic management skills. "At Boroondara, a number of team leaders and directors work in areas that were not their original specialisation," Moloney says.

Goulding was attracted to local government when she was at university studying cultural studies and psychology and working part-time at Boroondara's contact centre. She went on to travel overseas and complete a postgraduate course in international relations and a master's degree in professional communications. Her work at Boroondara builds on the practical skills she developed working on the council's front line. "The contact centre is really the ears of the organisation and my current role involves encouraging people to have their say on new infrastructure projects," she says. "I really like working to give people a voice."

**CAROLYN RANCE**

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Keen ... Amy Goulding and Genevieve Moloney enjoy community-based work. Photo: Paul Ashwell

### LEADERS EMERGE

Genevieve Moloney and Amy Goulding say seeing women in senior management roles and working in a sector that encourages professional development gives young women the confidence to build successful careers.

Moloney says learning more about local government's range of work and how councils approach it was a highlight of the LGPro Emerging Leaders Program. The program aims to develop Victoria's future local government leaders. People who take part learn about leadership styles, the benefits of networking, working with others and making decisions.

They are mentored and gain understanding of the need for skills in communication and community engagement.

Applications for the 2012 program open in September.

### LINKS

[lgpro.com](http://lgpro.com)  
[managementchallenge.com.au](http://managementchallenge.com.au)