

Grow the talent pool

Insights on gender representation, diversity and inclusion in the property industry

Acknowledgements

The Property Council of Australia established the Property Male Champions of Change (PMCC) in 2015 to drive gender equality in the property industry and increase the number of women in leadership roles.

The PMCC is committed to achieving a significant and sustainable increase in the number of women in senior leadership positions in the property industry, to work together and to lead with visible action.

The PMCC is convened by business leader Carol Schwartz AM, a former Property Council National President, and brings together senior leaders across the industry's development and construction, investment, funds management and agency sectors.

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The Property Male Champions of Change

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For more information on the Property Male Champions of Change (PMCC) please visit <http://propertycouncil.com.au/pmcc>

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Foreword

To support the Property Male Champions of Change (PMCC) strategy, EY and the Property Council undertook research in 2016 to understand property career pathways, as well as the barriers and drivers to recruiting, retaining and promoting women.

The results were illuminating. We found that many female property leaders “fell into property by accident”. As leadership is often predicated on property industry experience, many women were hitting a glass ceiling at middle management level.

The report also revealed three key barriers preventing women from rising through the ranks in the property industry: the boys’ club mentality, pay inequality and lack of diversity in senior leadership positions.

In 2018, we conducted a second wave of research to identify any shifts in attitudes, behaviours or industry sentiment over the past two years. The research explored women’s entry into the property industry and their career progression. It also included a new focus on men’s and women’s experience of everyday sexism in the workplace. More than 2,600 employees participated in the survey across 18 PMCC companies. We also interviewed 20 women in diverse roles and different stages of their careers to capture their pathways into property and their experience of the industry.

This report highlights a number of significant changes over the last two years, and many of these changes are positive. Workplace flexibility is increasingly normalised and more workplaces accommodate caring responsibilities for both men and women. There is greater awareness around the gender pay gap among men, and many companies have taken long strides to close that gap. People

also believe the industry is much more diverse and inclusive than it was just two years ago.

The industry has established many of the systems, practices and policies required to support greater gender diversity and inclusion, and this is acknowledged repeatedly in the interviews with female leaders included in this report. However, achieving leadership parity and large-scale cultural change takes time. Indeed the survey shows that in some important areas there has been little or no progress. There is still much work to do.

We know that innovation occurs at the intersection of diverse ideas and perspectives. This research underscores the diversity of backgrounds and experience that women bring to the property industry. Women are more likely to start their property careers with a foundation of education and work experience in other industries, whereas men are more likely to have a set of property-specific skills and experience. The case studies of 20 women included in this report emphasise this divergence and demonstrates how diversity of thought adds value not just to individual property companies and our industry, but to the broader Australian community.

The findings from this report contribute to the growing body of evidence which supports diversity and inclusion as a business enabler. In a time of increasing change and disruption, further advancement of genuine diversity and inclusion will help the PMCC and other property leaders to accelerate change across the industry.

How has the property industry changed over the past two years?

“I am confident that the industry’s collaborative nature will continue to drive the diversity agenda.”

Sally Franklin, Group Executive, Real Estate Services and Business Operations, Investa Property Group

“Every organisation is hungry for innovation, and one of the core indicators of innovation is diversity.”

Amanda Steele, Executive Managing Director, CBRE Asia Pacific

While there is still much work to be done to achieve gender equality across the industry, substantial structural improvements have been made throughout the industry as corporate policies and workplace cultures evolve. Leaders have stepped up and are leading tangible change in their organisations. Companies are now more accepting and supporting of employees who require flexible working arrangements or who have caring responsibilities outside of the workplace. Indeed, flexibility is being used as a recruitment tool. People’s perceptions of the industry’s diversity and inclusiveness have also improved, and more people are aware of the gender pay gap.

Normalising flexibility and caring

The property industry has advanced attitudes to flexible working arrangements and supporting staff to work where and when best suits their personal needs. There has been a shift from presenteeism and hours of work to outcomes. The industry is also more supportive of staff with caring responsibilities (such as children or elderly parents).

The impacts of this progress have been felt by both women and men, and are widespread and positive.



“The industry has come a long way and is generally accepting that one size does not fit all. Leaders understand that they must have processes and policies in place to address flexibility otherwise they won’t retain people.”

*Noral Wild, Head of Alternative Investments
- Australia, JLL*



Workplace flexibility

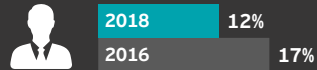


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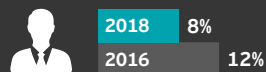
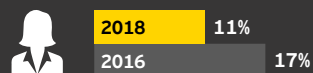
Women attracted to the industry by flexible working conditions (16% in 2016)

The industry is more attractive to potential employees

Fewer cited ‘lack of flexible work arrangements’ as a barrier to entering property



Fewer cited ‘not accommodating those with caring responsibilities’ as a barrier to entering property



Flexible working is a contributor to success



Embracing diversity and inclusion

According to people surveyed, the property industry has become more diverse and inclusive over the past two years.

Eight in 10 men (79%) and seven in 10 women (70%) believe the industry has become more diverse and inclusive. Of those, 43% of men and 29% of women believe the industry has become "much more diverse and inclusive" over the past two years.

Very few people (only 5% of men and women) believe the industry has become less diverse and inclusive.



"The Property Male Champions of Change have elevated the diversity discussion and made it core business. Diversity has been normalised, to the point where it feels jarring if you don't see a 50/50 gender split on stage."

Belinda Ngo, Executive Director - Capital Markets, Property Council of Australia



Increasing support for pay equity

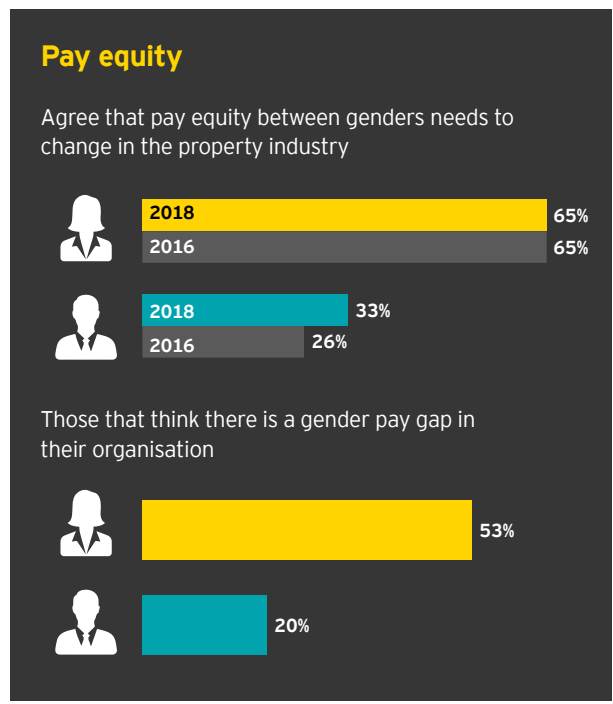
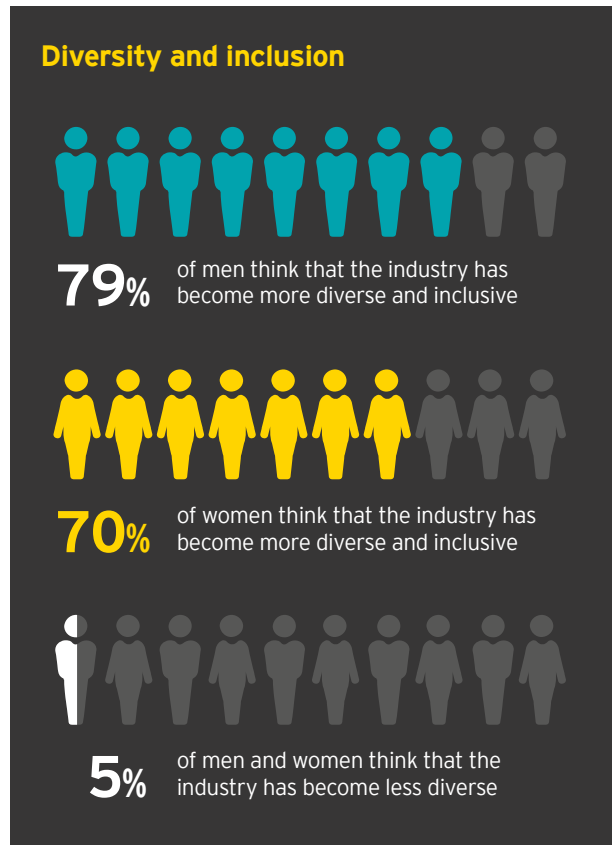
Awareness of and action on gender pay equity appears to be bearing fruit. Men are more likely to agree that pay equity is an issue than two years ago (33%, up from 26%). Women's perspectives remain unchanged with 65% wanting action in 2016 and 2018.

However, just one in five men (20%) believe there is a gender pay gap in their organisation and that men are paid more for doing the same job as women. Women are significantly more likely to perceive a gender pay gap (53%).



"I have had all the usual battles that females unfortunately still expect - salary being number one. But if you do not ask, you don't get."

Andrea Brown, Partner, Knight Frank



What should the industry focus on next?

While clear progress has been made in the past two years, there is more work ahead.

Supporting women to progress to leadership roles

Men continue to hold the majority of senior leadership positions. Women hold 25.9% of senior leadership positions¹.

According to survey respondents that self-identified as leaders, the data from both 2016 and 2018 indicates that having a family remains an inhibitor to leadership for women but not for men. In 2018, eight in 10 (77%) male leaders have children, whereas only six in 10 (61%) female leaders do. These results are statistically unchanged since 2016 and indicate that further work is required to remove barriers to leadership for women with children.

Another issue that disproportionately disadvantages women is the length of their tenure within the property industry. As leaders are usually promoted from within the property industry ranks, this advantages men who are more likely to have property-related education. Our research finds that 39% of male leaders studied property and real estate, compared with 29% female leaders. Meanwhile, 71% of male leaders have worked in the property industry for 10 or more years compared with 54% of female leaders.

Our 2018 results find, once again, that women have been employed with their current organisation for a shorter length of time than men. In fact, 16% of women have been at their current organisation for 10 years or more, compared to 24% of men. Women also continue to have a shorter tenure in the property industry more broadly, consistent with 2016 (39% have been in the industry for 10 years or more, compared to 58% of men).

Consequently, women hit a glass ceiling at management level, with fewer women being promoted to leadership positions across all age groups.

However, while men continue to obtain leadership positions in larger numbers, female leaders in 2018 continue to challenge the perception that significant industry experience is a prerequisite as they reach leadership positions at a younger age.

"It's just as important to go to the psychology school as the engineering school. We need people from all backgrounds. Technical skills are needed in parts of the business, but people skills are necessary in others - and as you rise up the ranks, people skills are often the most important."

Louise Mason, Group Executive and CEO Commercial Property, Stockland

Women in leadership



77% of male leaders and 61% of female leaders have children



16%



24%

Those who have been at their current organisation for 10+ yrs



39%

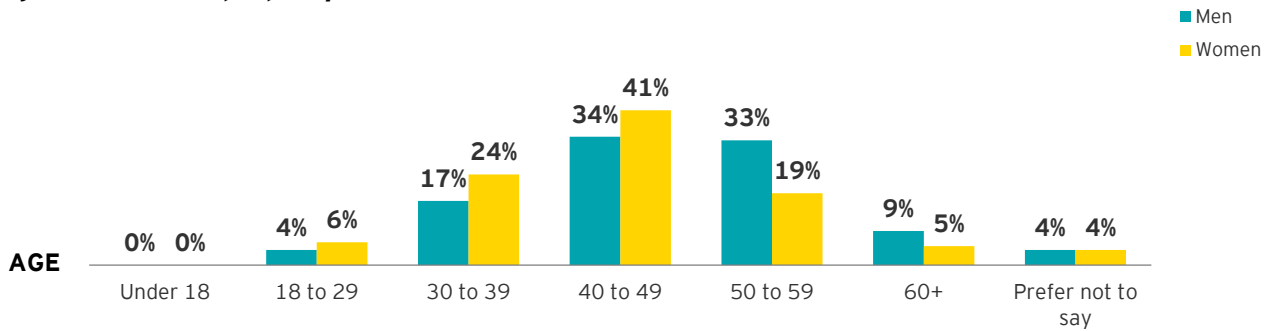


58%

Those who have been working in the property industry for 10+ yrs

¹Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) 2017/18 data for Property Male Champions of Change organisations. 'Senior leadership positions' refers to the following WGEA categories: Key Management Personnel; Other Executives/General Managers; and Senior Managers. This equates to CEO-1, CEO-2 and CEO-3 roles.

Age of leaders in property



"We need to think more broadly about the skill sets we need."

Susan MacDonald, Head of Retail, Mirvac

Men's and women's desire to climb the career ladder has not significantly changed over the past two years (87% men and 79% women desire career progress). But a gender gap remains, as women are still less likely to believe they will achieve their desired progress (28% of women think it is extremely likely, compared to 51% of men).

Women are twice as likely to believe attitudes towards female leaders need to change (63% of women hold this belief compared to 32% of men). These perceptions remain unchanged since 2016 and foreshadow further work to change cultural attitudes and show women that the property industry supports female ambition.

"Just promoting someone into a role isn't enough. You might be eager to get more female representation in senior roles, but you must back that up with support."

Lillian Fadel, Group General Manager of Centre Experience, Scentre Group

Desire to progress



87%

of men have a desire to progress to a leadership position



79%

of women have a desire to progress to a leadership position

Those who think that they are likely to achieve their desired level of progress



28%



51%

Those who think that attitudes towards women in leadership need to change



63%



32%

Addressing everyday sexism²

Everyday sexism occurs in both formal and casual interactions between people in the workplace. In many cases, everyday sexism is found in little things said or done that reinforce gender stereotypes. Everyday sexism is frequently invisible.

The six most common examples of everyday sexism are: insults masquerading as jokes; women’s views or voice devalued; role stereotyping; preoccupation with physical appearance; assumptions that caring and careers don’t mix; and unwarranted gender labelling.

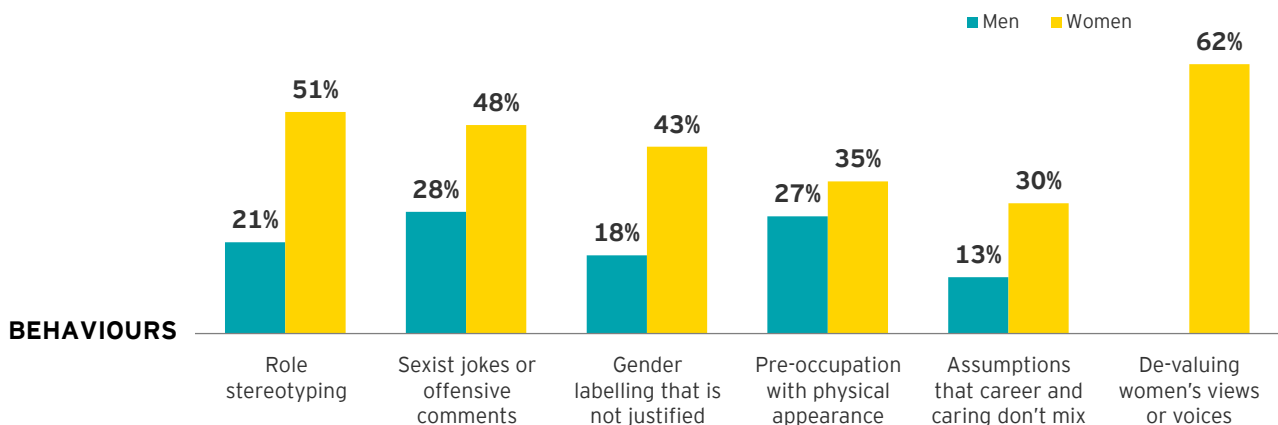
Everyday sexism is something that women and men in the property industry both encounter. However, a greater proportion of women experience it and it manifests differently depending on gender.

Verbatim feedback illustrates that seemingly minor instances of everyday sexism, when experienced regularly, can have a cumulative impact on a person’s self-esteem and can ‘wear down’ their passion for their work, their industry and their desire to progress to more senior levels.

The majority of women (80%) have experienced one of six behaviours identified as everyday sexism in the last two years. Most commonly, they experience:

- ▶ **Devaluing women’s views or voices**, including men interrupting or talking over women, explaining things as if women have no prior skills or knowledge, not listening to or supporting women’s views until they are re-stated by a man. Six in 10 (62%) have experienced this at least once in the last two years, and three in 10 (28%) have experienced this on five or more occasions.
- ▶ **Role stereotyping**, such as making assumptions about the suitability of roles and tasks based on gender, referring to tasks as “men’s work” or “women’s work”, excluding women from important tasks or decisions. One in two (51%) have experienced this at least once in the last two years and one in five (21%) have experienced it more than five times.

Experienced everyday sexism



²Please see the Male Champions of Change ‘We Set the Tone: Eliminating Everyday Sexism’ report for further information on everyday sexism and practical actions to address everyday sexism in the workplace (<http://malechampionsofchange.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/We-Set-The-Tone-Eliminating-Everyday-Sexism.pdf>)

Although everyday sexism predominately affects women, 47% of men have experienced everyday sexism in the last two years. The most common forms of everyday sexism for men are:

- ▶ **Sexist jokes or offensive comments** based on gender. Three in 10 men (28%) have experienced this at least once and one in eight (12%) have experienced this on five or more occasions in the past two years.
- ▶ **Pre-occupation with physical appearance**, such as comments about body shape and size or clothing over skills and competence. One in four men (27%) have experienced this at least once and one in nine (11%) have experienced this five or more times in the past two years.



“There have been times when I heard “it’s a good time to be a woman in property” - implying that I’d got the job because I was a woman - but I don’t think anyone would say it today.”

Amanda Steele, Executive Managing Director, CBRE Asia Pacific



“I was genuinely concerned I’d be seen as too opinionated or bossy because I’d heard other females labelled that. This made me reluctant to throw my ideas around in a room full of men.”

Elena Seymour, Asset Manager, Charter Hall



Qualitative verbatim feedback provided in the survey reveals that everyday sexism can also take different forms including:

- ▶ **General exclusion**, such as not shaking someone’s hand, asking questions or requesting feedback from one gender in a meeting, or deferring to members of one gender for decisions.
- ▶ **Downplaying gender equality efforts**, such as dismissing action as ‘box ticking’ exercises, stating that women are appointed just to meet a ‘target’, or expressing dissatisfaction with the existence of initiatives such as International Women’s Day or Property Male Champions of Change.

Positively, there is clear evidence that attitudes to everyday sexism are changing as awareness grows. Of the 2,600 respondents to the survey, more than 2,000 provided verbatim comments related to everyday sexism indicating their keen interest in this issue.

Building inclusion

Despite the significant progress made since 2016 in many areas, from flexible working to awareness of the gender pay gap, there remains a general feeling that the “boys’ club mentality” is a barrier to women working in the property industry. In fact, 61% of women and 34% of men still believe this attitude discourages people from pursuing long-term careers in property. A third of women also identify the “boys’ club” as the biggest barrier to career progression (33% of women, compared to only 11% of men).

Culturally-entrenched attitudes do take time to break down. Visionary leadership, supportive policies and active role modelling will all play central roles in dismantling unsupportive attitudes and helping shape a new culture based on diversity, inclusion and innovation. Cascading commitment from leadership to managers will accelerate and cement cultural change.

Barriers to inclusion



34%

of men believe that the “boys’ club mentality” discourages people from working in property



61%

of women believe that the “boys’ club mentality” discourages people from working in property

Those who think that the ‘boys club’ mentality is the biggest barrier to career progression



33%



11%

“Unfortunately, there is still a huge bias when men look at a woman in property and see them as ‘finance’ rather than ‘property’. And yet, I’ve spent my entire 25-year career in property and many senior men in property came from ‘finance’ and seem to be perceived as ‘property’”.

Anastasia Clarke, Chief Financial Officer, The GPT Group

“There can be a cultural bias toward employing and promoting people who are ‘real estate lifers’. We need people who have valuation or construction backgrounds, absolutely, but we also need people from strong diverse backgrounds.”

Briar Dowsett, General Manager, Funds Management, QIC Global Real Estate

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“The next evolution of 50/50 will only come when the balance of roles tips at the EXCO and leadership levels.”

Anastasia Clarke, Chief Financial Officer,
The GPT Group

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“I think a cultural change is happening - but it’s still a work in progress.”

Emma Woodhouse, Project Director, Commercial,
Urban Regeneration, Lendlease

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“We need to seek and recruit from a much broader talent pool than just those who’ve put their hands up for real estate. We need to think more broadly about the skill sets we need.”

Susan MacDonald, Head of Retail, Mirvac

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Actions to grow the talent pool

This research project continues to uncover opportunities to expand the industry's talent pool through targeted actions. The Property Male Champions of Change (PMCC) has established clear priorities for 2018/19, which include:

Champion change through managers

- ▶ Cascade commitment from leadership to management
- ▶ Develop practical actions that managers can take to champion gender diversity and inclusion in their team and across their organisation
- ▶ Identify opportunities to embed action and leadership on gender equality among managers throughout our organisations such as through KPIs linked to diversity outcomes
- ▶ Host regular discussion forums with managers to explore the importance of gender diversity individually and organisationally, as well as barriers to leading and opportunities for action

Build an inclusive industry

- ▶ Build upon insights from the survey and discussion groups held in our organisations to develop practical actions to eliminate everyday sexism in our organisations
- ▶ Convene a workshop with key property industry leaders and associations aimed at igniting commitment to gender equality across the wider property industry
- ▶ Convene a roundtable with chief procurement officers to identify opportunities to engage suppliers to step up on gender equality
- ▶ Continue to normalise flexibility and caring in our organisations including by reporting on and sharing what has worked and what hasn't

Grow the talent pool

- ▶ Undertake research to understand the industry's graduate and recruitment profile and identify opportunities to target alternative courses and professions for recruitment
- ▶ Build upon workshops convened with talent managers and women at different stages of their careers to identify barriers in talent processes that hold women back from appointments and promotions, and develop a toolkit of best practice approaches to talent identification, development and promotion
- ▶ Hold 'warts and all' workshops with recruitment partners to discuss challenges and opportunities for increasing the recruitment of women to property (including specific job families with low representation of women) and communicate expectations on gender diversity for all candidate pools
- ▶ Audit the retention and promotion of women in our organisations to identify common themes and practical actions
- ▶ Tackle occupational segregation and 'problem-spots' within our organisations (i.e. areas with low representation and/or retention of women)

Close the gender pay gap and enhance gender reporting

- ▶ Conduct a gender pay gap review at least every two years and take action to close any gap
- ▶ Foster sharing and learning across PMCC organisations on barriers and opportunities for closing the gender pay gap
- ▶ Increase PMCC transparency and accountability by reporting publicly on additional metrics
- ▶ Enhance gender reporting, including by measuring our progress through a regular review of our data by organisation and as an industry

The PMCC will continue to work together to implement our established commitments and leverage new opportunities.

The PMCC will also build upon work commenced within our organisations to identify best practice workplace responses to domestic and family violence and explore opportunities for an industry-wide response.



“Women need to see their future is secure and that they’ll be supported in developing their career. And that plan needs to be on paper. There has to be a commitment. Yes, business ebbs and flows, but we need to do more to keep women in companies, particularly after they have children, and to secure more female leaders, otherwise we won’t change the statistics.”

*Sarah Scruby, Development Manager,
Frasers Property Australia*



WOMEN IN THE PROPERTY INDUSTRY



Behind the statistics are unique and inspiring stories of women at all stages of their careers and in each sector of the property industry.







Case study

“People don’t understand how many pathways into property there are, and the diverse skills required. It’s such an amazing industry. I love that we build cities and shape the way people live. Property is such a reflection of society - and it’s all about people.”

Kate Charlton

Assistant Development Manager, AMP Capital

After completing her university studies, Kate Charlton secured a position with AMP Capital’s real estate graduate program in 2017.

Since then, she’s gained exposure to the breadth of AMP Capital’s real estate business - from property management to investment management, and from office and mixed-use development to shopping centre analytics - and is now working on the development of Quay Quarter in Sydney.

Kate holds a Bachelor of Engineering (Civil) and a Bachelor of Commerce (Finance) from the University of Queensland.

The journey

Kate didn’t make a conscious decision to pursue a career in property.

“It just happened,” she says, conceding that it might just be in the family blood.

“My Mum is a town planner, Dad is a property lawyer and my sister’s an architect. I wanted to study pure maths, but my parents thought I’d never get a job. The compromise was engineering, and because I wasn’t sold on it, I also chose commerce because the flexibility appealed to me.”

Her entrée into engineering was “a shock,” she says. “I have sisters and went to an all-girls high school. Then at uni, I walked into my first engineering lecture and only about 15 per cent were female. It was definitely a different dynamic to what I was used to.”

It didn’t take long for Kate to conclude that she “...wasn’t destined for a career as a civil engineer”. But she saw that her degree provided valuable “building blocks” that she could apply to any field she chose.

To graduate, Kate needed to complete 60 days’ work experience in an engineering environment.

“I went to a concrete factory in Logan and worked with 100 men. I was thrown in the deep-end - which is the best way to learn. I started each day at 6am at the factory, driving forklifts, testing out lab equipment, working in the quarry. It was great fun.

“And being female worked in my favour. The men were really great, and I found they were willing to get to know me, and teach me, because I wasn’t just one of the blokes in the factory.”

While it was a “great experience”, it confirmed to Kate that her career path lay elsewhere.

Defining moments

After sitting her final exams, Kate applied for a position in AMP Capital’s graduate program and soon found herself part of a two-year program - an experience that has been a defining moment in what has been so far a short but impressive career.

“I did four six-month rotations, all in real estate. I started in industrial property management, and went out to sheds again, which I loved. I got to see business in the city differently - and how the industrial sector drives the economy. It’s a fast-moving space in terms of technology, and I found that fascinating.”

Rotations in retail analytics, development and marketing followed before the opportunity to work with the development team on Quay Quarter arose.

"I couldn't say no to such an amazing opportunity - one that brings everything I've learnt together. I love that Quay Quarter will come alive in 2022, and everything we are putting in now is for the future. I love how we are creating a place for the city that didn't exist before. It's exciting."

Property's potential for women

"I don't know why more women don't choose property," Kate muses. "It's a great industry for women and, from my experience so far, it feels inclusive."

She's been surprised by the diversity and depth of skills required in the industry - "not just architects and engineers, but analysts, marketers, lawyers, financiers."

For this reason, Kate doesn't think there is a "perfect degree" that can prepare people for careers in property. "You just have to come and learn."

That said, Kate does note that the industry needs to get better at connecting with schools and universities. "Property was never spoken about at my school as an option, and even at university it wasn't showcased at career fairs. We were told about engineering firms, rather than the bigger picture."

Driving the diversity agenda

While some teams are more male-dominated than others - notably development - Kate doesn't feel it's an impediment to her career. "For the most part I don't notice it, which I think is a good sign".

But while property has traditionally been a male-dominated industry and there is still some work to do to drive the diversity agenda, Kate has had plenty of opportunity to work with and be inspired by senior women along the way.

"I find it interesting watching some of our female leaders at work. They are considered and make statements that matter. Their commentary and questions are very insightful. I'm impressed that they can walk their own path and do so without trying to be men."

Looking to the future

"Property needs to be seen as a legitimate path for women - not just something to fall into or to take on as a second career after spending time as an engineer, planner or architect," Kate says.

"People don't understand how many pathways into property there are, and the diverse skills required. It's such an amazing industry. I love that we build cities and shape the way people live. Property is such a reflection of society - and it's all about people."

Career lessons

- ▶ Look for lots of role models. "There are many people we can learn from. I identify characteristics I admire and look at how those characteristics could work for me."
- ▶ Don't be afraid to ask. "Ask to be involved and included. Ask questions. Put your hand up. People will take the time to help. And don't be confined to the job description. If you are willing to ask for more, you can get to work on some pretty cool stuff - just look at me."



"Property needs to be seen as a legitimate path for women - not just something to fall into or to take on as a second career after spending time as an engineer, planner or architect."





Case study

“In the property industry, when you have a good idea it gets implemented very quickly. If you enjoy change then property is the place to be.”

Amanda Steele

Executive Managing Director, CBRE Asia Pacific

Joining CBRE in 2013, Amanda Steele's career has spanned the business, government and community sectors. Amanda has held roles with Stockland, Suncorp, Insurance Australia Group, Sydney Water, the Prime Minister's Community Business Partnership and Clean Up Australia. She has worked with the highest levels of government and alongside boards, CEOs and political leaders including former Australian Prime Minister John Howard OM,AC and US Vice President Al Gore.

Amanda holds a Bachelor of Arts with Honours from the University of Sydney.

The journey

After spending the first 14 years of her career driving policy and practical action with government, not-for-profit organisations and corporations, Amanda believes that the industry's leaders and hiring managers must look beyond the standard skill sets required for property specialists in the past to expand the talent pool.

Amanda spent three years as Insurance Australia Group's senior sustainability manager and two years driving Suncorp's environmental agenda, before Stockland “tapped me on the shoulder” in 2009.

As Stockland's national sustainability manager Amanda was responsible for strategies, operations and management of social and environmental sustainability across the company's corporate portfolio. During her tenure, Stockland was ranked first in the world for property companies by the Dow Jones Sustainability Index.

“The joy of sustainability was that it gave me access to senior leaders, because sustainability is a board-level decision,” she explains.

In 2013, after a reshuffle at Stockland, Amanda left the company and found herself rethinking her career. Within weeks, she was snapped up by CBRE to lead its sustainability agenda across the Pacific. Since then,

Amanda has been promoted to oversee asset services operations in Australia and New Zealand.

“The skills I had honed from years working in sustainability, such as strategic, long-term and innovative thinking, allowed me to expand my career opportunities in CBRE's executive team with the support of our CEO, Ray Pittman, who recognised that transferrable skills would deliver diversity of thought.”

Defining moments

“My most defining career moment was becoming a mother for the first time and then returning to work,” Amanda says. “I was very conscious of the cascading responsibilities and decisions, and I approached the problem of flexible work in a creative way. I went to my employer with solutions, including job sharing with a co-worker who was also pregnant.”

“Another defining moment was leaving Stockland,” Amanda adds.

“Shifts in your career give you an opportunity to reassess. It allowed me headroom to think about what I wanted to do next, and to reassess my career focus.”

Property's potential for women

"The pace of the property industry was a big surprise - but a welcome one," Amanda says.

"Other industries can be quite slow moving and bureaucratic when compared to property. In the property industry, when you have a good idea it gets implemented very quickly. If you enjoy change then property is the place to be."

Amanda also admires the "upfront" culture in property. "It's a very straight-shooting industry."

Driving the diversity agenda

The industry's approach to diversity has changed "dramatically" in the last four years, and Amanda applauds the work of the Property Male Champions of Change "for bringing the issue to the forefront".

"There were times when I heard 'it's a good time to be a woman in property' - implying that I'd got the job because I was a woman - but I don't think anyone would say it today."

Amanda says she has encountered "everyday sexism" from both men and women and says it "needs to be called out". She recalls a recent panel session where a woman asked her "if my children were neglected because I travel too much. And my response was that no one ever asked my husband that question."

"I do think you have to work harder as a woman. I felt a responsibility to my daughter and other women to do a good job. It's harder to be one of the first females - but it is getting easier."

One of the areas ripe for reinvention is in the capital markets space, Amanda adds.

"When deals are being done, we need to be held accountable for the diversity of the team. But it's not just the responsibility of real estate agents. It's also the responsibility of landlords and investors to demand diversity in the sales teams they're dealing with."

Amanda says she doesn't explicitly point to her team's diversity, "but clients notice, and they comment. So that tells me the industry has a way to go."

Looking to the future

To expand the talent pool, we need to widen our focus, Amanda says.

"One of my best professionals comes from a food retailing background and she looks at property through a completely different lens and is hungry for learning because it's all new to her."

"Every organisation is hungry for innovation, and one of the core indicators of innovation is diversity."

Career lessons

- ▶ Focus on skills. "Be clear on what you like to do, but don't lock yourself into a specific job role."
- ▶ Seek out a sponsor. "I've never said no to anyone who's asked me to sponsor or mentor them - and I never would. It's as rewarding for me as it is for them, and I value the different lens I get to look through."
- ▶ Don't apologise for wanting work life balance. "No one could question my work ethic, but equally, they couldn't question how important my work life balance is to me. I push back hard on that, and I'm unapologetic. I try to be quite disciplined. I hear women say 'I'm really sorry, I've got kids'. Don't be sorry about that! Stop apologising about your life outside work."



"Shifts in your career give you an opportunity to reassess. It allowed me headroom to think about what I wanted to do next, and to reassess my career focus."





Case study

“The industry sees that we need diverse opinions and skills to develop innovative strategies. Now that I’m a manager, diversity is at the forefront of my mind.”

Elena Seymour

Asset Manager, Charter Hall

As an asset manager with Charter Hall, Elena Seymour is responsible for a \$800 million portfolio of prime logistics property spread over 280,000sqm and 20 tenant customers in Queensland. Elena is also a member of the Property Council’s Industrial Committee in Queensland. Prior to working with Charter Hall, Elena managed Brookfield Office Properties’ Queensland commercial portfolio, which consisted of multiple A-Grade office towers.

Elena is currently completing a Bachelor of Business (Finance Major) with Swinburne University, and holds a Diploma of Property & Asset Management from the Property Council Academy.

The journey

“After graduating from high school, I wasn’t sure what career path to head down. I deferred from university and picked up the first full time job I could find, which happened to be in residential property management with Lendlease Communities.

“By the time I turned 22, I was a senior residential property manager and had started to think about how far I could take my career.”

Identifying commercial property as a promising long-term career, Elena began looking for a suitable role.

“I knew it was going to be challenging without a degree or commercial property experience, but I was willing to take a role in administration to get my foot in the door.”

Elena “jumped” at the chance of a three-month contract role with Brookfield Office Properties, “even though I knew I was taking a risk”. The risk paid off, and she was to spend almost seven years with Brookfield.

“On transferring from residential to commercial, I found my ability to learn quickly and contribute on the job played a big part in my career progression. But I was also given a massive opportunity only a month into the role

when a property manager went on leave. I jumped into the deep end to show I was a team player and could contribute.

“By the time I left I was managing A-Grade assets in Brisbane’s CBD,” Elena adds.

Moving on to Charter Hall, Elena was steadily promoted from senior property manager to asset manager, a position she holds today.

Defining moments

“A lot of my career progression has come from mentorships with my manager,” Elena explains.

“I’ve been in commercial real estate for 11 years, and in that time I’ve had three really strong relationships with managers that turned into informal mentorships.

“The first was Greg Hefferan at Brookfield, who was a great champion. He showed me that I was more than capable of taking on roles. I really looked up to him and still value him as a great industry colleague.

“Anna Patterson at Charter Hall really rallied behind me and understood the pressures of the job that came with being female.

“And my new manager, Ben Butler, has also been fantastic. I think I’ve been really lucky, because not everyone has positive experiences, but these three people invested time in developing me, optimising my abilities and giving me the confidence to seize opportunities.”

Property’s potential for women

“A career in property, particularly in asset management, is dynamic and never dull. It changes from day to day, involves quick thinking and formulating strategies.

“In addition to men, women have a lot of important qualities to offer these roles, as they are often highly organised, pay attention to detail, and are good at forming strong relationships.

“Stereotypes are starting to break down and more women are able to forge careers as the industry embraces diversity. It’s a really exciting time for women in this dynamic industry.”

Driving the diversity agenda

“I was sometimes surprised by the lack of diversity in commercial real estate when I first moved across from residential,” Elena says.

“It was jarring to walk into boardroom meetings to find I was the only female. The gender gap did surprise me, as most women held junior or administration roles and there were few females in senior leadership roles.”

This is changing, and Elena says leaders - both male and female - play a central role in helping younger women find their paths in property.

“The industry sees that we need diverse opinions and skills to develop innovative strategies. Now that I’m a manager, diversity is at the forefront of my mind.

“I do think it’s important for managers to encourage women to have a voice and participate rather than being passengers in meetings. I’ve noticed, more often than not, that males have no issue speaking up, while females sometimes sit on the sidelines. This was me when I was starting out, until my manager at the time raised it. I realised I was genuinely concerned I’d be seen as too opinionated or bossy because I’d heard other females labelled that. This made me reluctant to throw my ideas around in a room full of men.

“Some people may think it comes down to lack of confidence, but I think for me it was driven by the culture in the industry at the time, which fortunately is changing.”

Looking to the future

“I’ve had such a positive experience in property and I can’t see myself moving away from the industry. I don’t know where the next step will be as I am really enjoying my current role, but I want to continue to grow and to grab opportunities that come my way.”

Career lessons

- ▶ Speak up. “It’s really important to be an active participant, not a passenger. Nothing will change if we just sit in these rooms and we don’t add value - our opinions - to the discussion.”
- ▶ Be prepared to take a risk. “Look at a role for its opportunity to develop new skills versus a job title or where it sits in the organisational hierarchy. An admin role might not be your dream role, but it will help you build up your core knowledge base. Sometimes career opportunities are not well defined and you never know where that role may take you if you do it well.”
- ▶ Set yourself goals. “I often set myself goals to learn new skills. I take a strategic approach and look at where my skills gaps lie. In the past, I would actively sit with my manager and ask them to run me through lease proposals and analysis, for example, so I could gain a holistic overview of how things connect across the portfolio. Now that I’m at the next stage of my career, I’ve looked at where I feel most challenged - presenting and public speaking - and I throw myself into that, even if it makes me uncomfortable.”
- ▶ Get the piece of paper. “You don’t necessarily need a degree to work in property - I’m proof of that. But I do think as you rise up into leadership roles, formal qualifications become more important. I put it off so long, because I thought I didn’t have the time, but I got into a rhythm and routine. My choice of study has built up my business communication and financial analysis skillset.”
- ▶ Look beyond university. Elena’s first course was in property management through the Property Council Academy. “It was a really great networking opportunity and gave me a more strategic overview of how the industry works,” she says.



“It’s a really exciting time for women in this dynamic industry.”





Case study

“Because real estate isn't a 9-to-5 job, I might do some work at night, but it suits my lifestyle because I can do it all around my family.”

Maria Agostino

Manager, Industrial, Colliers International

Specialising in the sale and leasing of warehouses and industrial land in the outer South West of Sydney, Maria Agostino spent more than a decade as a behind-the-scenes linchpin of Colliers industrial team.

In 2016, she harnessed her deep market knowledge to take on a customer-facing role and has since leased almost 85,000sqm of industrial property and sold more than \$15 million in value.

The journey

“My parents own a property portfolio, and I've always had a passion for property,” Maria says.

“But I never thought I'd be a sales and leasing agent. Then again, 20 years ago I couldn't have imagined women in industrial property at all.”

Maria's career started straight after school, working in facilities management roles first with Darebin City Council in Melbourne and then with Sydney's Liverpool City Council.

In 2004, Maria joined Colliers as a receptionist before progressing to the position of personal assistant to the head of industrial in New South Wales, Gavin Bishop. This was a role Maria was to hold for a decade and was a rich training ground for her future career in sales and leasing. One of the most successful real estate agents in the country, Gavin has clocked up more than \$7 billion in industrial sales and proved to be a valuable teacher and advocate for Maria.

“Gavin was always encouraging me to move into an agency role, but for many years I was reluctant. I had two young kids, and I didn't think it suited my lifestyle. And besides, I didn't feel I had the confidence to take on the job.”

Defining moments

“I helped Gavin with a lot of presentations and submissions and got an appreciation of what it felt like when we got a listing. I always thought 'I could be doing this'. But I just wasn't confident to take the step, even though I could see how rewarding the role was.

“Then one day I was at a function with Gavin and another Colliers director, Adrian Balderston. There was a role in sales and leasing up for grabs, and they kept telling me: 'now is the time - and we will support you'.

“The knowledge I'd gained from working with such senior and experienced people was phenomenal. I had watched the way Gavin and other senior leaders communicated with customers, negotiated leases and closed deals for a decade.

“I'd also dealt with all the contacts on a weekly basis and had a lot of support from senior management. The only thing holding me back was my confidence, so I got my certificate and made the move.”

Since then, Maria has leased almost 85,000sqm of industrial property and sold more than \$15 million in value. She's been recognised as a REINSW Awards of Excellence winner - something she says was “fantastic validation for my hard work”.

“My goal is to be a million-dollar agent within the next two years.”

Property's potential for women

Now, looking back, Maria wonders why she didn't take the plunge earlier.

"If I had taken the step five years ago, when my children were younger, I would have managed. Real estate is such a flexible job, which allows me to pick up my kids a couple of days a week after school or take my son to soccer practice. I fit a lot into my day.

"Because real estate isn't a 9-to-5 job, I might do some work at night, but it suits my lifestyle because I can do it all around my family."

Driving the diversity agenda

Diversity is increasingly recognised as a sales tool, Maria says, as agencies respond to the growing expectation from clients that sales teams reflect the diversity within the community. This push is coming from large asset managers, but also from smaller clients.

"Often, we are pitching to mum and dad investors, and having a woman on the team works well. It makes people feel more comfortable.

"When I go to meetings or site visits I'm often the only woman there. I noticed it at first, but now it doesn't bother me," Maria says, adding that Colliers has since employed more female sales agents in the industrial team and more appointments will follow.

Looking to the future

Maria emphasises the importance of networking opportunities for women in property.

"Having a formal structure in place really helped get my name into the market. The first time I went to a 500 Women in Property event I couldn't believe how many women there are in property - and seeing them all in the one room was great. I'd like to see more of this."

What's Maria's message for other women thinking about striking out into the unknown?

"A career in sales and leasing can be challenging. You've got to have the determination and grit for it - and it takes patience and a lot of hard work. But it's very rewarding. I don't know why I didn't take the plunge earlier."

Career lessons

- ▶ Mentors are magic. "Definitely get yourself a mentor. I've got two that I check in with regularly. Both are men, and if I'm not sure how to approach something, I can call one of my mentors to ask: 'how do I handle this?'"
- ▶ Just do it. "I'm surprised how easy it was to make the leap. I've realised it was my own personal lack of confidence that held me back."



"A career in sales and leasing can be challenging. You've got to have the determination and grit for it - and it takes patience and a lot of hard work. But it's very rewarding. I don't know why I didn't take the plunge earlier."





Case study

“There are huge benefits to diversity. Abandoning the boys’ club ideology and beers at 5pm on Friday has created a more family-friendly environment that has been good culturally for our team, but also for our clients.”

Kristy Megaw

National Operations Manager, Cushman & Wakefield

Kristy Megaw currently leads facilities management, environmental services, project management, safety and procurement for NAB’s portfolio.

Kristy commenced her career as a business analyst with retail department store Harris Scarfe before moving to what is now Cushman & Wakefield in 2012.

A finalist with the Telstra Business Women Awards in 2011, Kristy holds a Bachelor of Communications and Professional Writing from the University of South Australia. She has completed certificates in interior design and project management, and a diploma of management.

The journey

“I fell into the property industry rather than chose it. After completing a Bachelor of Arts in professional writing, I found a job as a business analyst. I started undertaking analytics into leasing strategies and rental returns per square metre, and I found I really enjoyed it,” Kristy says.

Within two years, Kristy was Harris Scarfe’s national operational manager. Her arts degree gave her an edge when writing tenders, and she was soon managing strategic and operational procurement at more than 40 sites around Australia.

Kristy faced challenges in being taken seriously. “As a young woman negotiating large contracts for a national retailer, I’d often find people searching for my reporting lines to see how I fit into the organisation. But I enjoyed the dynamic. I liked challenging the status quo.”

Defining moments

In 2011, Kristy was nominated for the national Telstra Business Women Awards, something she says was “pivotal” to her career.

“As someone up-and-coming, the recognition made me hungry to succeed and further my abilities. But by 2012, I’d been with Harris Scarfe since I was 21. I’d been travelling constantly and working really hard for years, and I wanted a chance to take a step back and think about my next career move.”

Scoring a role as a regional facilities manager with UGL, which would eventually evolve into Cushman & Wakefield, Kristy took responsibility for 150 sites around Australia.

“It was a massive learning curve at first, but I’m inspired to better myself as a leader every day.”

Today, Kristy is National Operations Manager - NAB and MLCL with responsibility for the NAB and MLC Life property services portfolio.

Property's potential for women

Kristy says she is "inspired and excited by the changing face of property".

"It's exciting to talk deals, to envision what we can do with a space, and to have my hands on everything from the deal through to the fitout. No day is the same, and you don't get bored."

Kristy is also inspired by how "young and dynamic" property has become. "I see it at Cushman & Wakefield. It's an exciting environment and great to watch the young, diverse talent coming through our team, and in our client base too."

Why diversity delivers

"There are huge benefits to diversity. Abandoning the boys' club ideology and beers at 5pm on Friday has created a more family-friendly environment that has been good culturally for our team, but also for our clients," Kristy says.

"The customer service that some of the younger women in the team deliver has influenced the older-school engineering thinking too. It's been infectious."

Looking to the future

"The Property Male Champions of Change - as visual and present leaders - have done a fantastic job of driving change.

"I've noticed a real change in the last four years, which coincided with my relocation to Melbourne. Cushman & Wakefield is full of great female talent, and the company is passionate about diversity. I work with fantastic male and female professionals with very different skill sets ... and I think that helps."

The next challenge is to expand the support for women returning to the workforce after having children.

"We lose a lot of women after they go on parental leave. This is something I have noticed over the years, which is why it took me a long time to make the decision to start a family."

Now pregnant with her first child, Kristy says Cushman & Wakefield has supported her.

"But we do need more support and flexibility for women after taking time out to have children. It's something that all businesses, not just those the property industry, should focus on."

Career lessons

- ▶ Don't undervalue yourself. "No one else will argue for a higher wage. You have to fight for equal ground".
- ▶ Consider your complementary skills. "The majority of property work is communications based, and my professional writing base has contributed to my successes and helped me to take a different point of view."
- ▶ Persevere, because the world of work is changing. "I've been overlooked in the past because of specific gender ideologies. Some of it was just the period of time. It was challenging to see peers moving up the ladder and getting more opportunities - and in some cases getting paid double what I was paid - when I knew my value. But I refused to give up."



"It's exciting to talk deals, to envision what we can do with a space, and to have my hands on everything from the deal through to the fitout. No day is the same, and you don't get bored."





Case study

“At the collective level, women are included in thought leadership events and on short lists for jobs, for example, but it is still spoken about as if it is heroic to achieve that. Now it’s time to normalise it. It shouldn’t be special to achieve gender balance - it should just be how we do business.”

Deborah Coakley

Executive General Manager, Funds Management, Dexu

Deborah Coakley has responsibility for managing Dexu’s \$14.3 billion funds management business which comprises a diversified wholesale property fund, a wholesale logistics trust, a healthcare property fund, a diversified mandate and three capital partnerships.

She has held various management roles in property management, consulting, human resources and outsourcing with more than 20 years’ experience gained in organisations such as Deloitte, Qantas and Alexander Mann Solutions.

Deborah holds a Bachelor of Business degree from University of Technology Sydney and is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Australian Company Directors.

The journey

“Originally, I was going to study law, but I ended up doing a relatively new Bachelor of Business course at UTS. While there I had access to a wide variety of subjects, like public relations and marketing, as well as statistics and economics.

“But one of the things I recognised early in my degree - and that was as someone who had taken school very seriously - was that I was tired of studying. So, I started working in a small company part-time before I’d even completed six months at uni.

“I always wanted to be a part of a company and university became something that supplemented my work. I found that the balance of practical experience and study worked for me.”

Deborah’s hard work paid off. By 1999 Deborah was made a partner with Deloitte, a move she says was a “confidence booster”.

“It gave me a sound base at a young age, and showed me that I could achieve,” she says.

Taking opportunities has been a hallmark of Deborah’s career since.

“It’s quite intimidating to go from one industry to another or one role type to another - people don’t do it because it is actually hard,” she explains.

Deborah spent two years as managing director of consulting firm Resources Connection and another two with leading the Asia Pacific operations of recruitment giant Alexander Mann Solutions before an opportunity arose at Qantas to drive policy, programs and tools to attract, assess and recruit talent.

Working at Qantas was “enormously educative,” Deborah says.

“Multiple difficult business circumstances at Qantas taught me resilience and the value of people. When budgets are tight, and all you have is your team, you learn to innovate through people.”

Deborah spent more than five years at Qantas, ultimately leading organisational development, talent, performance, leadership and engagement. In 2013, Deborah made her entry into the property industry, accepting a job on the executive driving people and culture with Dexu.

Defining moments

“Being in property has given me the opportunity to draw on many of my experiences and apply them in an industry that is both dynamic and a significant driver of economic growth,” Deborah says.

Last year, Deborah was appointed Executive General Manager for Funds Management.

“I have absolutely no doubt my current role is my most challenging, but also the most inspiring. There are some exciting opportunities in funds management, and as one of Dexus’s core strategic pillars, the focus on this area of the business is strong.”

Property’s potential for women

Property, Deborah observes, has made its transition away from the traditional boys’ club, but it has been a slower process than for other industries. But Deborah has experienced change first hand. “Because we take risks every day, decision-makers took comfort in the fact that ‘I know this person so they are low risk’.”

But the industry is changing, Deborah adds, and has become “very welcoming to women”.

What’s more, the scope for careers is virtually limitless.

“Every kind of role exists in a property company. And if you like tangible things, there’s nothing more tangible than an office tower.”

Why diversity delivers

Diversity of thought is mission critical at a time when the traditional property cycles are recalibrating, Deborah adds.

“The property cycle doesn’t have a standard timeframe anymore and not all asset classes are moving in sequence. Diversity of thought is important to help people deal with change, and to ensure we don’t only rely on the past to reflect what will happen in the future.

“No one wants to hear someone say: ‘at my last company we did it this way’. But what you can do – and what is really powerful about bringing diversity of thought from other industries – is to explain the consequences of decisions and what we can learn.”

Looking to the future

The leadership driven by the Property Male Champions of Change has been instrumental to the industry’s evolution, Deborah says.

“It’s been a personal change – whether that’s within the leaders themselves or their organisations – and I suspect that’s why there has been a seismic shift in the conversation. I’ve noticed a lot more respect shown to females participating at every level.”

Deborah applauds the industry’s efforts around pay parity and flexibility, for example, which she says “has come forward in leaps and bounds in a short time as the stigma disappears for both men and women”. Dexus, in particular, has achieved pay parity in like-for-like roles, and normalised paid parental leave and flexibility for men.

“At the collective level, women are included in industry thought leadership events and on short lists for jobs, for example, but it is still spoken about as if it is heroic to achieve that. Now it’s time to normalise it. It shouldn’t be special to achieve gender balance – it should just be how we do business.”

Career lessons

- ▶ Be curious. “I’ve always been an inherently curious person. I’ve asked a lot of questions and been a broad reader. There’s no harm in knowing what’s going on, so read up, meet interesting people, be inquisitive.”
- ▶ Be open to organic sponsorship. “We often talk about finding sponsors, but I think true sponsorship is organic – it’s not something you ask for. Be honest. Build trust. Take on challenges to the best of your abilities, and when you make mistakes, own up to them. I don’t think you can underestimate how important trust is. Sponsors look for that.”
- ▶ Don’t expect to know everything. “I’ve never believed I’ve had all the answers, and that’s given me permission to try new things. Surround yourself with people who are experts. Generally, people are generous with their time and have helped me make career transitions.”

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“Diversity of thought is important to help people deal with change, and to ensure we don’t rely on the past to reflect what will happen in the future.”

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Case study

“There have been times when I’ve had challenging conversations. But I’ve learnt to be myself, to be transparent and honest, and true to what I’m working on. That’s how you get taken seriously.”

Sarah Scruby

Development Manager, Frasers Property Australia

Sarah Scruby has worked in the property industry for the last 14 years on many iconic Queensland projects, from Yungaba, a multi-stage residential development at Brisbane’s Kangaroo Point, to the masterplanned community of Hamilton Reach. Currently, Sarah is focused on Frasers Property’s Cova project at Hope Island.

Sarah is Deputy Chairperson of the Property Council’s Future Directions Committee in Queensland and has a Bachelor of Business Management, Real Estate and Development from the University of Queensland.

The journey

Sarah’s passion for property started early, with two parents who instilled in her the value of property investment to build wealth and security.

“Mum and Dad always encouraged me to purchase a property, and Mum was a real estate agent who came home each night talking about transactions and the ins and outs of property. The industry really interested me from a young age,” she says.

By her mid-teens, Sarah’s heart was set on a career in development. Three “fantastic” years at the University of Queensland led to a position with Queensland Rail in its graduate program, an experience she says was “fabulous”.

“And then one day I took a call from a recruiter who thought I’d be suitable for a role with developer Petrac.”

She spent nearly a year as a research and acquisitions analyst for Petrac, working on residential and retirement living projects, before putting her hand up to become a development finance analyst.

“By then it was 2008. I loved my work and we were gearing up for some really exciting projects,” she says.

Defining moments

“Then the GFC hit and we all lost our jobs,” Sarah says.

“I’d been working in the industry for two years in a boom - and it was really challenging to be faced with a bust.”

With a mortgage to pay, Sarah took a job as a receptionist for a mining services company because “that’s what I had to take”.

“I’d worked so hard for my dream job - and I’d found it. And then it was gone.”

While she was there for just a few months, it was a character-building experience that reminded Sarah of where her career aspirations lay. When the Australian Government’s nation-building projects kicked off, Sarah moved into the Department of Housing and Public Works as a property project officer.

“I worked with many others who had also come out of private development and had similar stories to mine. We were a hard-working powerhouse,” she says.

Enjoying steady promotions, Sarah managed 20 fast-paced public housing projects scattered throughout Queensland. “They were quite challenging, and I was on a steep learning curve. But after four years, I thought it was my time to move on”.

After a short stint with Sentinel Property Group, Sarah landed a role as assistant development manager at Australand, which is now Frasers Property Australia. Since then, she's worked on rewarding projects including the "historic and challenging" Yungaba under Brisbane's Story Bridge. She's assisted Frasers Property in Queensland to transition to a third party build model and acted as a client-side project manager alongside the builder throughout the construction of Linc and Affinity apartments.

Property's potential for women

Was the property industry what Sarah imagined when she listened to her mother talking transactions?

"I didn't realise how different each day would be. I never know what is going to crop up each day, which makes it interesting and rewarding work.

"Yes, there are tough days with tough decisions to be made. But I love developing new products and seeing places come to life. I love being down on the construction site and seeing ideas materialise - and to play a role in building new places for people to live."

While she acknowledges that development remains a male-dominated field, she has rarely encountered sexism.

"Generally, I've found builders to be very respectful of me. There have been times when I've had challenging conversations. But I've learnt to be myself, to be transparent and honest, and true to what I'm working on. That's how you get taken seriously."

Driving the diversity agenda

The industry is "definitely on the right path", Sarah says, and proudly points to Frasers Property's target of 70 per cent women for its graduate program. "Our view was that we need to do something dramatic because it's not changing fast enough," Sarah says.

"But I think women should feel encouraged that the industry is changing and there are plenty of opportunities for women to succeed. But working in the right company is really important."

Looking to the future

The glass ceiling still exists, although the cracks are starting to show. Smashing that ceiling takes more "succession and forward planning", Sarah says.

"I don't think companies understand how valuable this is.

"Women need to see their future is secure and that they'll be supported in developing their career. And that plan needs to be on paper. There has to be a commitment. Yes, business ebbs and flows, but we need to do more to keep women in companies, particularly after they have children and to secure more female leaders, otherwise we won't change the statistics."

Career lessons

- ▶ Speak up. "Make sure you are heard. It can be hard, especially when you are in a room full of men, and I think many women starting out can feel fearful. But I've found it easier to speak up as my career has progressed, as I gain more knowledge and as I get to know more people. There is a confidence that comes with experience."
- ▶ Put yourself out there. "Being part of the Property Council's Future Directions Committee has really helped my confidence," Sarah says. "Go outside your own office to meet people and make your name in the industry. If you are a woman in this industry, you will stand out - because there aren't that many of us. Use that to your advantage."
- ▶ Understand people. "The property industry is really about people, personalities and a lot of psychology. Good communication skills are essential."



"I think women should feel encouraged that the industry is changing and there are plenty of opportunities for women to succeed."





Case study

“Being a female in a male dominated industry I knew very early on that I had to be confident and accountable for my own career...I’ve had wonderful support and been given some fantastic opportunities, but ultimately it has always been up to me to deliver strong performances and help my team to do the same.”

Sally Franklin

Group Executive, Real Estate Services and Business Operations,
Investa Property Group

Sally Franklin is responsible for the asset, property and facilities management, building technology, capital projects, sustainability, environment and safety functions across Investa’s platform.

With more than 19 years’ experience in the commercial property industry, Sally has previously held positions with MacarthurCook, Telstra, Urbis and CBRE.

Sally holds a Bachelor of Business Degree in Property from RMIT, an Estate Agents Licence (Victoria and Queensland) and is a qualified valuer. She is currently completing her Graduate Certificate of International Finance.

The journey

After initially studying fine art photography, Sally commenced a Bachelor of Business (valuations) at RMIT.

At the time Sally had little knowledge of the property sector’s scope and the opportunities which lay ahead. While in her fourth year of her four-year degree, Sally secured a role with CBRE in its valuations team.

“I learnt a lot about the broader industry, client relationships, workplace dynamics and the importance of a positive culture on company performance and staff engagement,” she says.

After three years in valuations, Sally made the decision to move to commercial property and accepted a role at Urbis as a commercial property consultant. It was here that she refined her negotiations skills and learnt to adapt to different leadership styles, while still remaining true to her own personal style and approach.

“After a few years, I was approached to head up property strategy at Telstra. At the time, I considered the role too senior and was hesitant to accept the opportunity due to fear of failure. I recall very clearly the conversations with my informal mentors at the time, who were both male,

and who unlike me, had no doubts I would be successful in the role and that I could lean on them. This gave me the confidence to take the role.

“Moving to such a large organisation outside of the property industry was a huge shift for me,” Sally says, adding that it was “very apparent” that she was working in a male-dominated industry.

“I found it a challenge to navigate my way through the political landscape, but I set out to deliver my strategies in a manner that was professional, engaging and collaborative. Effective stakeholder management was critical. On reflection, this role really defined my value proposition and shaped my vision for the leader that I wanted to be.

“After a number of years, I felt I needed to return to an organisation more directly involved in property, so accepted the role of fund manager at MacarthurCook, which was a great experience. During this time, I also had the opportunity to work on the establishment of an industrial REIT in Singapore.”

An opportunity then arose at Investa, a company Sally knew very well as Telstra’s largest landlord. In the 11 years since, she has held four positions.

“My current role as a Group Executive has been and continues to be the most rewarding. I am so inspired by our people and love that I play a part in the leadership of such a wonderful and honest organisation.”

Defining moments

“Being a female in a male dominated industry I knew very early on that I had to be confident and accountable for my own career,” Sally explains.

“I had to find the right tools to navigate my way through the industry I had chosen and ensure I remained true to my own personal style and the value that I bring to the organisation.

“I’ve had wonderful support and been given some fantastic opportunities, but ultimately it has always been up to me to deliver strong performances and help my team to do the same.”

Sally says having young children and working full time has placed “extra emphasis on the flexibility and culture of the organisation I chose to work for”.

“Working with Investa is like being part of a large family. You can succeed and fail all in the same day and still feel supported.”

Property’s potential for women

“I absolutely love this industry,” Sally adds.

“I have had a wonderful career. I haven’t had any incidences where I’ve felt my gender has been a hindrance to my success. I feel there is so much opportunity for women.”

One of Sally’s promotions at Investa was while she was on maternity leave. Was she surprised that her company was willing to offer such a role given her circumstances? “No, because I knew the leadership team believed in me and my capabilities. My career aspirations were known to them. I was delighted to get the call.”

Why diversity delivers

Sally says Investa’s employee benefits are designed to “develop, support and engage our staff at every level, while also providing the flexibility to achieve work-life balance”.

“We work flexibly and care more about our team’s performance and output than where and when they choose to work. Everyone has an equal voice and is encouraged to use it. We know that by giving our people

the flexibility to innovate and by drawing on their diverse backgrounds, cultures, and age, the business thrives as a result.”

Looking to the future

The Property Male Champions of Change have made “really great progress” in fostering diversity “from the top down”.

“I am confident that the industry’s collaborative nature will continue to drive the diversity agenda,” she adds.

“I have been very lucky with my experience as far as equality is concerned and I don’t take that for granted. There is still progress to make in this area across the broader industry.”

Career lessons

- ▶ Own your own career and be accountable. “Stop, pause and reflect on where you are and where you want to head in the future. Have the confidence to promote yourself and your achievements. Find the courage to apply for and accept new and challenging roles. And be clear on your value proposition.”
- ▶ Culture comes first. “What kind of organisation do you want to be a part of? The answer to that question should drive your career decisions.”

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“We know that by giving our people the flexibility to innovate and by drawing on their diverse background, cultures, and age, the business thrives as a result.”

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Case study

“You have a lot of options in property. It touches multiple facets of the economy and is a huge growth industry. Once you have the basic skills, you can transfer into other areas and add value.”

Danielle Dalby

Property Investment Manager, ISPT

Joining ISPT as legal counsel in 2007, Danielle Dalby was promoted to transaction manager in 2014. For more than three years she worked on acquisitions and divestments worth \$5 billion, including new and existing properties in the retail, commercial and industrial sectors.

In August 2017, Danielle was promoted to her current role, where she is responsible for an office portfolio of 190,000 sqm with a current value of around \$1.6 billion.

Danielle holds a Bachelor of Law from University of New England, and a Graduate Diploma in Property from Deakin University, as well as an Associate Diploma in Legal Practice and a Graduate Certificate in Applied Finance and Investment.

The journey

Danielle’s pathway into the property industry took a few twists and turns. After missing out on law at university, she studied legal practice at RMIT.

“I thought I’d become a paralegal. But in reality the majority of roles available were as a legal secretary. After two years of working in a legal firm I realised this wasn’t going to be enough,” she says.

Returning to complete a law degree while working was a challenge, but by the time she had concluded her degree and finished her articles, Danielle had four years’ experience as a legal secretary under her belt.

She soon found herself as a junior lawyer working in banking and finance law. “I acted for banks that were lending mezzanine finance to residential developers at Docklands,” she explains.

“I’d always had a strong desire to be more involved in the businesses I was providing legal advice for.” An opportunity to join ISPT’s in-house legal team arose. “ISPT was much smaller at that time and I felt like I was taking a bit of a risk. But in the second interview I met the CEO and fund manager, and the exposure to the senior ranks really appealed and I could see the growth potential.”

“I also liked the idea of helping the average Australian with their retirement savings. I grew up in the Western suburbs of Melbourne - my mum was a bank teller and dad’s a cleaner - so the ethics of what ISPT stands for truly resonated.”

Danielle made the jump just before the global financial crisis hit. “If I had stayed in banking and finance law I expect I would have needed to reconsider my career.”

At the same time, Danielle was juggling the management of a day spa she owned with her sisters, and the demands of a two-year-old. “I had a very full plate,” she understates.

Defining moments

While she loved being a lawyer, again, Danielle realised she wanted more.

“When you are legal counsel, you are always the navigator - giving people directions, saying left or right - but you never get to drive. I wanted to make decisions.

“Around that time, I completed my graduate certificate in applied finance and investment, and I wanted to get into the transactional side of the business.”

ISPT's former head of capital transactions, Tony McCormack, had "always been my champion" and encouraged Danielle to take on more responsibility. She started putting her hand up for non-legal roles. One disappointment after another followed. "I started to feel really disheartened".

Instead of giving up, she identified skills gaps, and commenced a part-time graduate diploma in property. "I got to the end of the course and I was still in the legal team. I felt I would never make the jump into a commercial role.

"And then, I got a five-week secondment into the capital transactions team. When I got there, I thought to myself 'I never want to go back'. It took around six months to sign off the permanent role - but I finally took the first step."

Property's potential for women

"I never really considered property. Even when I was a banking and finance lawyer - when I was lending to property developers - I didn't understand the industry, how it supports the economy or its growth potential and links to superannuation."

But the industry offers massive career potential for talented women, she adds.

"The property industry is very diverse and demands a broad range of skills and experiences. You have a lot of options in property. It touches multiple facets of the economy and is a huge growth industry. Once you have the basic skills, you can transfer into other areas and add value."

Driving the diversity agenda

While she's encountered both unconscious and conscious bias - "there have been times when men haven't bothered to shake my hand" - she prefers to focus on the support of exceptional champions.

"I have always been supported by a great network of amazing men and woman, too many to name individually, however three people changed the course of my career," Danielle says. "John Mosely, a partner at MinterEllison encouraged me to study law at the age of 21. Ian Beattie, a partner at Maddocks was a champion and supporter who always encouraged me to do more. And to this day Tony McCormack is still a trusted advisor and friend that I look to for advice, even though he is now the CEO of a new organisation. The common thread of these three gentleman is that they all believed in me when I didn't have confidence in myself.

"Having champions was very important to me. Coming from a home where my parents didn't have professional careers, I needed people who could advise me - how else do you navigate your way?"

Looking to the future

"I've heard 'you don't have the skills' in my career yet I saw people being picked for roles they hadn't done before - but I wasn't able to get that same break.

"I've thought about ideas for roles the business needed or about problems that could be solved. I've created business cases for roles - only to see them go to someone else.

"I've felt frustrated at times. I kept hearing about women getting tapped on the shoulder - but that never happened to me. I had to work really, really hard, and put myself out there. And then it didn't always come off."

While it hasn't been easy, Danielle believes that everyone rising up the ranks is responsible for helping others that follow.

"Yes, you may have been held down, but let that go. We need to put our hands out to help other people, otherwise we'll never see the change we're looking for."

Career lessons

- ▶ Put your hand up - and often. "Don't wait for someone to tap you on the shoulder. It's unlikely and it's rare. Work hard. Get things done. Cut through."
- ▶ Don't feel like you have to know everything. "I've always embraced a growth mindset - it's important in the property industry, where there is always something new to learn."
- ▶ Recruit a champion and a mentor. "These will play important and different roles in your career."
- ▶ Think ahead. "If you don't get a role, as I haven't, look at what you are missing and how you can gain that skill. If that's the hoop you need to jump through to get the job, then jump through it."



"Don't wait for someone to tap you on the shoulder. It's unlikely and it's rare. Work hard. Get things done. Cut through."





Case study

“Property is a flexible industry with many jobs you can do without being in the office all the time. It can accommodate many different working styles and personality types.”

Noral Wild

Head of Alternative Investments - Australia, JLL

As Head of JLL's Alternative Investments team in Australia, Noral Wild specialises in alternative real estate sectors, including health and aged care, seniors' living, student housing, education, build-to-rent, child care, data centres and renewables.

Prior to her role with JLL, Noral worked with EY in the real estate advisory team for nearly a decade. Noral has graduate and post-graduate qualifications in business and property from RMIT University.

The journey

Noral says she took a “convoluted path” to find her way into the property industry. After taking a ‘gap year’ Noral started a degree in archaeology. But stone tools and site surveys proved uninspiring.

“After a year, I realised I would probably never get a job in archaeology, and I started to rethink my future.”

Noral’s “lightbulb moment” came when she realised “I always turned to the property section of the newspaper and was obsessed with the board game Monopoly - and I realised that property was where I wanted to be.”

Trading paleolithic artefacts for property proved challenging at first. The door to RMIT’s business degree, specialising in property, didn’t open immediately, and it took steely determination to transfer into the course of her choice.

But the hard work paid off, and by her second year Noral was selected by the university as a high-performing student for a graduate position with wealth manager JB Were.

“I worked with JB Were for two years part-time as a property trust analyst while I studied. It was a role based in the indirect property market, and I realised I wanted direct property exposure.”

Noral secured a job with Jones Lang Wootton, which was to become JLL, and spent five years as a manager. During this time Noral completed post graduate studies and obtained her valuation qualification.

“I was pregnant when I sat my oral exam to obtain my valuation qualification, the examiners thought I was nervous but it was just a case of morning sickness,” she explains.

Returning to work four months after her baby was born, Noral found parental leave “quite a different proposition in the late 1990s to what it is today”.

“It was definitely the early days for how workplaces dealt with maternity leave. I wanted to go back to work full-time but requested to work each Friday from home. It took some time for my managers to get their heads around the idea - they saw it as a long weekend every week,” she says.

Defining moments

Deciding that it was time for “new challenges and a clean slate” Noral “called a few firms for a chat”.

“I explained that I’d need to work from home sometimes - surprisingly all but one company was prepared for that. I verbally accepted a role with one of the firms.”

The very next day, EY called to offer her an excellent opportunity in their real estate advisory services group.

“Having to say no to the job that I had verbally accepted was one of the hardest things I’ve ever had to do. I actually considered not taking the EY job because I was feeling so overwhelmed. But I decided I was making the move for me - so it had to be the right move.”

The move was the right one, and Noral spent a decade with EY real estate advisory team before another opportunity beckoned.

“I reached a point where the only career progression for me was to go into partnership, and at that point in time I didn’t feel the partnership model was where I wanted to be. Luckily, this time I didn’t have to go door knocking. I got a call from JLL. The leader of the health and aged care team was retiring and they were looking for someone. After six months of negotiation I moved back to JLL.”

Property’s potential for women

“Property is a flexible industry with many jobs you can do without being in the office all the time. It can accommodate many different working styles and personality types,” Noral explains.

The transactional nature of property, with its “super-tight time frames” can be challenging for people juggling work with family life. “But I’ve never felt like I’ve received any different treatment because I am a woman, or that my ideas weren’t as valued.”

While she’s never had formal mentors, Noral remains close with three male leaders who have been “supportive and encouraging” during her career. “They taught me a lot, and really went out of their way to look after me and other staff.”

Why diversity delivers

Diversity certainly breeds innovation, Noral reflects.

“I see it a lot within my team. We have a good balance between male and female - which hasn’t been a conscious decision, but a case of getting the right people for the roles. When we come together to work on a particular project we get different views and a stronger outcome as a result.”

Looking to the future

“The industry has come a long way and is generally accepting that one size does not fit all. Leaders understand that they must have processes and policies in place to address flexibility otherwise they won’t retain people. With the cost of recruitment and down time, companies now understand it’s better to accommodate people rather than have them leave.”

Career lessons

- ▶ Don’t discount what you do know. “Men are more likely to believe they can do a job, even if they don’t have the experience. If women have 50 per cent of the skills for a job, they often think they can’t do it. They don’t want to be caught out overexaggerating their skills. Meanwhile, a man will focus on what he can do.”
- ▶ Learn to say ‘no’. “I’m guilty of not getting work/life balance right. It is partly because I’m driven and passionate about what I do, but also because I don’t like saying ‘no’ to opportunities. If I had my time again, I would train myself to be more disciplined about what projects I was willing to take on so that I had a better balance between work and personal life.”



“The industry has come a long way and is generally accepting that one size does not fit all.”





Case study

“I've worked in two countries, I've travelled, I work flexibly, meet a variety of people and do not have a typical day. I've been in this industry for 20 years and I'm still evolving my career and finding new challenges.”

Andrea Brown

Partner, Head of Project Management & Building Consultancy,
Knight Frank

Leading Knight Frank's Project Management and Building Consultancy division since 2014, Andrea is a RICS Chartered Surveyor who has spent the last two decades working in Australia and the United Kingdom.

With a Bachelor of Building Surveying from the University of the West of England in Bristol and a Certificate of Professional Competence from the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, Andrea specialises in all aspects of technical building consultancy advice, project management and development monitoring with a specific interest in the industrial sector.

The journey

“My pathway into the property industry was a combination of love and fate,” Andrea says.

“I had a fascination with buildings from a very young age - particularly industrial or working buildings. In England, the building stock is older and so old mills, dockyards, factories and rural hospitals are mysterious, tell a story and can be imposing and beautiful.

“I thought that this meant I needed to be an architect. That idea was soon put to bed once I realised it involved seven years at university and it was the adaption of existing rather than the design of new buildings that I was interested in.”

Fate intervened when Andrea was a 17-year-old in a “very small school in the middle of Cornwall” when a career advisor suggested she would be suited to a career as a land surveyor. Being proactive, Andrea arranged work experience prior to submitting university requests, and soon found herself immersed in a practice in the heart of the stunning Devon countryside.

“The land surveying bored me senseless but the other partner in the company was a chartered building surveyor and I loved what he was doing - so much so that I spent my three weeks mostly doing work experience with him instead of measuring stone quarries.”

Andrea says this experience encouraged her to “take a leap of faith” and study building surveying at university, which she says turned out to be “the perfect mix of construction, law, economics and design.”

Further work experience during the university holidays led to her first-time role as an estates officer responsible for their capital expenditure works for a large hospital trust. “It was an exciting unknown, but I knew I was heading in the right direction.”

Defining moments

After a 10-year career in the UK, including several years with building giant Watts Group, Andrea took another leap of faith.

“I saw an opportunity in Australia to progress my career. And I never looked back.”

Landing in Australia, she got a job in an agency. Australia's industry was a breath of fresh air after working in the often-hierarchical UK industry.

“Australia is such a hybrid of nationalities and I noticed that the industry was more accessible to women. It felt like there were opportunities.”

Property's potential for women

When it comes to dynamic and rewarding careers, Andrea says property “ticks a lot of boxes”.

“I knew I didn’t want to work in an office all day. I wanted to apply and grow my skill set, engage with other people, travel and understand how things work. I have found property is an industry where you can grab all of that.

“But it wasn’t until my first job that I really understood what the property industry was - and how big the opportunities were for me.”

This is why encouraging young women to consider careers in property must start while they are still at school.

“Young women need to understand the opportunities that are out there. And we need strong female and male leaders talking about how amazing our industry is, not just for females, but for everyone.”

Driving the diversity agenda

Andrea applauds the fact that “so many strong women are coming up the ranks”. But she says the industry’s challenge is to support talented women who choose to have career breaks. “This challenge is not unique to property,” she observes.

“Juggling work and family is one of the real inhibitors to women obtaining leadership roles. It’s hard enough going back to work after a baby. If you haven’t got a strong mentor watching your back it can be really, really hard.”

But the business benefits of supporting women after parental leave are immeasurable. “Everyone I know returning after a career break to have children is more efficient. Women are very good at compartmentalising their priorities and extremely organised, especially after they’ve had children,” she adds.

Looking to the future

Attracting the best and brightest talent will demand more flexible businesses, Andrea adds. A passionate promoter of flexible working, Andrea was the first senior female at her previous organisation to work flexible hours.

“I had a strong mentor who was supportive - and that was instrumental. I’ve worked flexibly for the last decade and I can demonstrate the flexible framework to the people and clients who I work with. I can show them how to manage it.”

Working flexibly hasn’t always been easy, and Andrea says there have been times when she’s found herself “working crazy hours and then realising I’m doing a full-time job on a three-day wage. It’s happened to me, so I’m determined to ensure it doesn’t happen to others who work for me - male or female”.

“Flexibility at work needs to be available in some form or another to everyone. Life throws up unexpected things all the time and you need your work environment to understand that and not add to the stress. As long as the culture you have established in the work environment generates high engagement through trust, integrity, vision and recognition, the flexibility piece is the easy part.”

While every career has its challenges, Andrea says her two decades in property has been richly rewarding.

“I’ve worked in two countries, I’ve travelled, I work flexibly, meet a variety of people and do not have a typical day. I’ve been in this industry for 20 years and I’m still evolving my career and finding new challenges.”

Career lessons

- ▶ Make the most of mentors. “I am passionate about mentoring and have had some amazing people mentor me over the years - all of them male. Mentors can shape careers. Finding the right person is really important - and it’s a two-way street. Look beyond the people in your business and make sure you both get something out of it.”
- ▶ Find a flexible work style that suits you. “One size does not fit all. I work slightly different hours, including some evenings, but I’m happy to do that as I could be collecting my children from school at 3pm. Others like the 9-to-5. Set boundaries around what you will and will not do. I will not take phone calls between 4.30pm and 6.00pm for example - and people accept that.”
- ▶ Don’t be afraid to ask. Andrea says she has had “all the usual battles that females unfortunately still expect - salary being number one. But if you do not ask, you don’t get”.

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“It wasn’t until my first job that I really understood what the property industry was - and how big the opportunities were for me.”

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Case study

“The more authentic you are, the greater the opportunities are, as they often arise through the relationships and networks you have established. And those relationships are often developed and strengthened when working together in the most challenging of times.”

Emma Woodhouse

Project Director, Commercial, Urban Regeneration, Lendlease

The Project Director on Melbourne Connect, a new landmark innovation precinct in Melbourne, Emma Woodhouse has 23 years' of experience within the development and construction industry including more than 17 of these working for Lendlease. Emma's diverse range of experience spans across commercial and education, multi-unit residential, hotels, retail, civil and civic infrastructure, public realm and large scale urban regeneration master planning.

Previous to her time at Lendlease she was a project manager with Staged Developments Australia and a site engineer with Concrete Constructions. Emma holds a Bachelor of Building (Construction Management) with Honours from Deakin University.

The journey

Emma's intention to study building was a surprise to those who knew her. “I went from an all girls' school to being just one of three females on my course. It was a big change. But very quickly I knew it was a good choice for me.”

“I had tailored all my studies around becoming an architect until I did some work experience in a local practice in Geelong,” Emma says.

“My perception and the reality were very different and I found myself a bit lost as I was no longer sure this was the right career path for me.

“At my secondary school, Sacred Heart College, I had a fantastic careers counsellor who suggested I consider looking at a building degree. I had not thought about building before, but I had a passion for design, an aptitude for maths and science, and loved working in teams. A building degree was a way to bring all of this together.”

In her second last year of study, she spent the year working on a refurbishment project of the Victoria Barracks, “and this provided real life experience of working in the industry - and I loved it”.

A graduate position with Concrete Constructions - again on the Victoria Barracks - soon followed. And then a “right place at the right time” moment occurred for the next stage of Emma's career.

Defining moments

Emma was given the opportunity to work with Staged Developments Australia in 1997 on “some of Melbourne's most exciting projects at the time” - including the Hotel Lindrum and the Westin Apartments.

“The exposure and responsibility I was given very early in my career working alongside David Marriner on high profile projects which were beautiful, iconic and leading in design was incredible.

“But I recognised that, for my career to progress, I needed to broaden and deepen my experience.”

Many of Emma's former employees at Concrete Constructions had spent some halcyon days with Lendlease, “and they spoke about Lendlease with such passion that I decided that if the opportunity came up it was the only company I wanted to work with”.

With her eyes firmly fixed on the future, in 2001 Emma commenced the next chapter in her career where she was

recruited for a project management role, “and I’ve now been with Lendlease for 17-and-a-half years. The initial six of these years I spent in our building business and the last 11 years have been in our development business working on a broad range of urban regeneration projects”.

Property’s potential for women

Property is a “highly demanding but extremely rewarding industry”, Emma says, noting that it can be challenging for people who want to balance careers with family life.

“We work in an environment where there are ebbs and flows in workload and pressure depending on the stage of a project. There are sometimes long work hours required and times where there are constant calls or meetings that may have to happen out of hours which puts pressure on families and work life balance.

“I think a cultural change is happening - but it’s still a work in progress. A lot of male staff at Lendlease now take parental leave - and I think that is definitely helping.” The subtle shift from ‘maternity’ to ‘parental’ leave encourages shared parenting, and “it gives men a perspective on how much it takes to be the primary carer”.

The obstacles women face in carving out careers in the property industry are surmountable and are more than outweighed by the opportunities.

“We get to shape cities and skylines and have positive impacts on the way people live and work. We also get to work with some of the most talented and inspiring people and the projects we create are part of the legacy we get to leave behind.”

Why diversity delivers

Emma underscores the importance of diversity in driving greater innovation outcomes, and points to her current project as an example.

“We are creating an innovation precinct for and in partnership with University of Melbourne that will provide a purpose-built facility to bring academia and industry together. Complex urban regeneration projects like this demand real diversity of thought and freshness of ideas.

“Our project team was and still is made up of diverse ages, genders and skill sets and we work exceptionally collaboratively. Informal feedback we received was that the diversity in our team was a big point of difference compared with our competitors. It wasn’t necessarily the winning component, but it was a factor.”

Looking to the future

Emma would like to see more support networks for women as they take on bigger responsibilities - especially after they become parents.

“My career stagnated for a few years when I had children,” she says. This was partly because “I was conscious of trying to balance everything” and also “because at the time no one was tapping me on the shoulder giving me the confidence to step up for the next role”.

“I think we need more support for women when they take on senior roles. As soon as you move up the ladder, the pressure increases. Often, we put additional pressure on ourselves trying to juggle work and family life, but it is important to have the support networks in place to help women succeed.”

Career lessons

- ▶ Get comfortable with being uncomfortable. “As you become more experienced you accept that you don’t need to know everything and you need to push yourself beyond your comfort zone. It is important to surround yourself with clever people and work collaboratively to draw on knowledge and experience.”
- ▶ Seize each opportunity and be driven and passionate about everything you do. “Don’t be afraid to challenge yourself and to take on new opportunities which may diversify your knowledge and skills.”
- ▶ Be resilient and be authentic. “Don’t take things personally. I’ve always tried to follow the mantra to be hard on issues and soft on people. To survive in this industry, you need to be both resilient to endure the challenges and you also need to be authentic when dealing with people and in your leadership style.”



“We get to shape cities and skylines and have positive impacts on the way people live and work. We also get to work with some of the most talented and inspiring people and the projects we create are part of the legacy we get to leave behind.”





Case study

“My experiences in the industry have been positive, but I do think it was because I was fortunate to join the right organisation at the right time. And then I created my own opportunities.”

Susan MacDonald

Head of Retail, Mirvac

With nearly three decades' experience in property investment management, Susan joined Mirvac in November 2010. Prior to joining Mirvac, Susan was chief operating officer of Galileo Funds Management, a boutique funds manager established in 2003. She was the fund manager of Galileo Shopping America Trust, a listed AREIT, and a director prior to its sale in 2007.

Susan was previously managing director of AMP Shopping Centres and started her career with Lendlease, where she worked for 16 years.

The journey

Susan began her working life in retail with the department store chain Grace Bros in a part-time role while at school.

“I completed a Bachelor of Arts with majors in anthropology and psychology - which as it turns out, is really appropriate for retail. But I didn't know what I wanted to do when I left school.

“I'd worked part time since the age of 15, and I knew I wanted to pursue an interesting career.

“My father had worked with Lendlease's construction arm, Civil and Civic, for many years. He really encouraged me to pursue a career in property. The way he talked about Lendlease and the career opportunities were very appealing.”

Susan joined Lendlease in 1987, through its graduate program. “I'd applied for a number of graduate roles, and Grace Bros had offered me a retail traineeship, but I took the Lendlease job,” she says.

Susan was to stay with Lendlease for 16 years, spending the last five-and-a-half years in London, during which time she established the retail asset and property management division for Lendlease Europe, initially for the billion-dollar Bluewater development in South East England. Working on this project and in London “was a dream come true”.

Defining moments

After working on an “amazing asset”, in 2002 Susan was approached to take on the role of Managing Director of AMP Shopping Centres.

“I'd been at Lendlease for 16 years, and I thought that it was time to move on. I thought it was a great opportunity to come home, but in a new role with a new organisation.”

Susan says the move was “challenging at first”.

“When you're in one organisation for a long time, you take for granted your internal networks. I had started with the graduate program, had moved around a lot, and was exposed to a large network of people. I took this for granted. Then, when I moved to AMP, I had to work out how to navigate through a large and diverse organisation.”

After 18 months with AMP, in 2003 Susan made the decision to move on again, something she said was a “brave decision”. She had worked with property doyen Neil Werrett at AMP, and he was looking for a small team to help establish a boutique property funds management business.

“Seeking counsel again from my father, he challenged me as to what I wanted to do to grow my experience. I felt I hadn't had exposure to the capital markets and funding in Australia, and so I joined Neil.

"It was a start-up and a risk. The stakes were high. There were six of us who literally survived or not based on our decisions. Given it was a start-up, the deal was I didn't get paid until we successfully listed, which was about six months from when I started. But I was at the stage of my life when I was ready for a change. I'd had an amazing career at Lendlease and that gave me confidence to back myself."

Establishing Galileo Funds Management, Susan became the fund manager of the Galileo Shopping America Trust (GSA), a listed Australian Real Estate Investment Trust. "It was a gruelling yet fascinating experience. I enjoyed every moment and it set me up for what I'm doing now," she says.

The Responsible Entity for GSA was sold in 2007, and soon after the Global Financial Crisis hit.

"I decided to take a career break. I took a year off, travelled extensively, caught up with old friends, did house renovations and then started looking for new roles."

Susan had considered moving into a different industry, "but I still read the property press every Thursday and I enjoyed real estate and realised many of my good friends all still worked in real estate. Mirvac offered me an opportunity - and it has ended up being one of the best decisions I've ever made".

Susan now has her "perfect job - combining everything from the capital side through to how you create a great urban environment, working alongside some amazing and talented people".

Property's potential for women

"I love that you can touch and feel property," Susan says.

"There aren't many industries that appeal to the senses and stir the emotions. And I love retail. I've had lots of opportunities to move out of retail, but I believe I've converted a shopping hobby into a career. Retail is definitely my game."

Driving the diversity agenda

"My experiences in the industry have been positive, but I do think it was because I was fortunate to join the right organisation at the right time. And then I created my own opportunities."

Susan applauds Lendlease's enduring commitment to diversity. "I was very lucky, because way back in the late 80s, early 90s, Lendlease was focused on gender diversity. They saw the benefits of a diverse workplace. I

worked with amazing and talented women, like Louise Mason, Louise Martin, Susan Lloyd-Hurwitz, Georgina Lynch and Penny Morris. It felt like a peer group of women - and that made it a lot easier."

Looking to the future

Susan would like to see the industry "seek and recruit from a much broader talent pool than just those who've put their hands up for real estate".

"We need to think more broadly about the skill sets we need. Well over half the people who use our assets are female." She points to members of her team who have backgrounds in tourism, FMCG, retailing, residential and retirement expertise. "Their insights are sensational," she adds.

She looks forward to "taking the diversity discussion broader" to culture, background, age and experience, but agrees that gender is a good place to start.

"If we get gender diversity right, we'll probably get cultural diversity right," she says, adding that the industry needs to attract more culturally and linguistically diverse Australians into property.

"There's a massive cultural diversification going on in the people who use our assets. It would be great to celebrate a lot of different faces in real estate," she says.

Career lessons

- ▶ Seek good counsel. "Find and nurture good working relationships and build as many contacts within your business as you can. That's the nexus for establishing a great external network, and if you are lucky they will turn into great friendships."
- ▶ Look for sponsors. "I probably wouldn't have chosen property if my father hadn't suggested it, but he was very encouraging, suggesting I utilise my experience in retailing and bring it into retail property. When you start, you need someone backing you - I think that helps."
- ▶ Build your own brand. "Your own personal brand and integrity are often worth more than the business you have worked for sometimes - and that's what people remember."

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"There aren't many industries that appeal to the senses and stir the emotions... Retail is definitely my game."

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Case study

“Getting the financing and funding right to support the best possible outcomes for our members influences every single person in Australia. I find that incredibly meaningful and rewarding.”

Belinda Ngo

Executive Director - Capital Markets, Property Council of Australia

Leading the Property Council's capital markets team since June 2017, Belinda Ngo is responsible for national investment, tax and capital market policy for Australia's \$670 billion property investment industry.

Prior to joining the Property Council, Belinda worked for Macquarie Group and KPMG, and has amassed more than 15 years of professional experience specialising in tax policy, corporate advisory and capital management.

An accountant and a solicitor of New South Wales, Belinda holds a Bachelor of Business (Hons) and Bachelor of Laws, University of Technology, Sydney.

The journey

Belinda trained as a lawyer before landing in KPMG's corporate tax division fresh out of university. After seven years, she moved to Macquarie Group to take on the role of senior manager responsible for treasury transactions.

“Both of these organisations provided really great career opportunities, but I was looking for a role where I could use my skills to make a meaningful contribution to the community,” she says.

Answering an advertisement for a policy role at the Property Council, Belinda has never looked back.

“I was fortunate that the hiring manager at the Property Council was open to employing someone from outside the property industry. I didn't have a property or policy background, but my technical background and training helped. I had transferrable skills - like problem solving, being able to analyse complex issues and communicate those in simple terms.

“I came into the capital markets team and was promoted after three years to the director of tax policy at a time when taxation reform was high on the federal government agenda.”

Last year, she was appointed to lead the Property Council's capital markets division and plays a critical role in maintaining the flow of investment that fuels the property industry.

Belinda's parents were sponsored to come to Australia as refugees from Vietnam, and she says this “is an important part of my personal story”.

“My parents worked really, really hard to give us the best possible life and my work ethic comes from them.”

Today, her parents “don't quite understand what being a property industry advocate means but they are happy I've got a good job, had opportunities to travel and enjoy a diverse career”.

Defining moments

“Putting my hand up for opportunities out of my comfort zone” has been a career characteristic of the last 15 years, Belinda reflects.

“While I was at KPMG, I took a three-month secondment to Amsterdam which furthered my professional and personal growth. I pushed myself to do it, even though it was challenging.”

She took another leap of faith with the Property Council. "I didn't know what to expect, as I had never been up close and personal with property or the politics behind it.

"And then I moved down to Canberra for three months while the Property Council was between executive directors in the ACT. I didn't know anyone, and it felt scary, but it was an amazing experience and gave me extra insights that helped me get my current role."

Property's potential for women

Belinda has found property a richly rewarding industry.

"Our advocacy work helps to support the creation of homes, workplaces and cities," she says.

"Getting the financing and funding right to support the best possible outcomes for our members influences every single person in Australia. I find that incredibly meaningful and rewarding."

Coming from the high-octane world of finance, Belinda says she has also noticed "it's an incredibly down-to-earth industry. Everyone is open and welcoming and genuinely want to come together to build a better industry that creates liveable cities and communities."

Driving the diversity agenda

Belinda is proud of the Property Council's bold action over recent years, which includes the Property Male Champions of Change, 500 Women in Property and the 40:40:20 campaign which set targets for gender balance on committees and at events.

"The Property Male Champions of Change have elevated the diversity discussion and made it core business. Diversity has been normalised, to the point where it feels jarring if you don't see a 50/50 gender split on stage," she says.

Looking to the future

Our next great challenge is to get better at selling the industry, Belinda says.

"People don't understand the diversity of roles in property. Everyone understands what the finance or tech sector are, but most people think property is real estate agents, construction workers and architects.

"It's not just about the breadth of roles. It's also about the breadth of organisations. There is a lack of visibility of even some of the largest organisations in property - organisations that are doing amazing things. We need to

get better at promoting our great property companies, particularly to university graduates."

The property industry also needs to look more closely at the potential of lateral recruits, particularly if it wants to widen the pool of talented women.

"If you are putting out an ad that demands property experience, you are immediately shutting out a lot of great people."

Belinda's career trajectory remains fluid, rather than fixed - something she says is possible in the property industry.

"I never came out of university thinking 'this is where I want to be in 10 years' time'. I've always thought about the intangibles - a job I enjoy, the opportunity to do meaningful work with great people. If I can continue in roles like this, I will be a pretty happy camper."

Career lessons

- ▶ Learn from those up the ladder. "You may look up and think that the natural order is for leaders in a certain sector to be male but reflect on their skills. What makes them a great leader? How can you emulate those skills? Focus on that, rather than on whether they are male or female."
- ▶ Take a risk. "Put your hand up, step outside your comfort zone and go for it. And remember, if someone else is willing to put you forward for a role, they'll try to help you succeed. You don't have to do everything on your own."



"If you are putting out an ad that demands property experience, you are immediately shutting out a lot of great people."





Case study

“Every diverse person we add to the decision-making process ensures those decisions are more rigorous, robust and defensible, and easier to explain to clients. When everyone thinks the same, we are more likely to miss opportunities and risks, and to miscalculate.”

Briar Dowsett

General Manager, Funds Management, QIC Global Real Estate

Appointed Fund Manager for the QIC Property Fund on 1 July 2017, Briar has more than 20 years' experience in the finance and property industries.

Prior to joining QIC, Briar was a senior portfolio manager with QSuper. She was a director of property equity and advisory at National Australia Bank, a portfolio manager at Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation and a vice president at BT Financial Group.

Briar holds a Bachelor of Economics from the University of Sydney, is a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and a CPA.

The journey

Briar always wanted a career in the property industry, but her pathway wasn't a direct one.

With her early sights set on a career as an architect, Briar completed work experience at an architectural firm while still at school. “While I was there, the entire firm told me it would be crazy to study architecture - that with a recession underway it would be hard to get a job. My back up was studying economics and accounting and they advised that this would eventually open doors to the property industry - and so that's what I did.”

Shortly after finishing university, Briar took a job with KPMG as an auditor. “It wasn't the ideal job for me, but it was a good stepping stone that gave me a broad access to industries and ideas,” she says.

“I did that for a couple of years, and recognised I was interested in funds management and that would be the next step toward property.”

A job with BT Financial Group followed, during which time she worked in London and New York and spent time in Des Moines. “I learnt how funds management worked, which was a great skill set to have. It wasn't property, though, so I kept looking.”

After the chief financial officer from BT Financial Group, Andre Morony, moved to the federal government's pension scheme, Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation, Briar was offered a new opportunity.

“At the time, there weren't many investment jobs in superannuation and so I worked with Andre, to take control of the fund's real assets and bonds. This gave me a foot in the door into the property industry without throwing out all the experience I'd gathered so far in my career and without having to take a step down or sideways.”

Defining moments

One of Briar's career-defining moments came as she began looking for her next career step.

“I wanted to get closer to the assets, but I didn't feel I could apply for a role as a property fund manager yet. I took an equity job with NAB around six months before the Global Financial Crisis, which was tough. I was in that job longer than I would have liked, but that really focused my attention on what I wanted to do next when the economy eventually improved.”

"It took me four or five years, but I thought long, hard and strategically about what I wanted from my next career step. I wanted to get back into superannuation and bring my direct property experience, to leave Sydney, and to be in an organisation with a positive culture where I could make a difference."

Briar "targeted" the types of firms she would like to work for and in time was appointed by QSuper to look after its real estate business. "I stayed for six years in a wonderful role that covered real estate as well as some other asset classes such as infrastructure, private equity and responsible investment funds, and that eventually helped me to get to QIC."

"This is the role I've wanted for my entire career, and I'm revelling in it."

Property's potential for women

"I always loved the idea of creating and shaping things. Property is tangible, and it's wonderful to work with something you can touch, feel and see. Each asset has its own characteristics, and so many skills go into running and building real assets. I find that fascinating."

"And it's a really dynamic industry. You're not stuck behind a desk. It's the best asset class in the world - I love working in it, and I really like working at QIC."

Driving the diversity agenda

"There can be a cultural bias toward employing and promoting people who are 'real estate lifers'. We need people who have valuation or construction backgrounds, absolutely, but we also need people from strong diverse backgrounds."

"I think the fact that I don't have a real estate qualification is a perceived barrier. But most of my career has been property related, and being more of a generalist gives you a really good business understanding. I haven't run a shopping centre, for example, but I don't think that stops me from being a good property fund manager."

Briar's background wasn't a barrier at QIC, she adds.

"Steve Leigh, QIC Global Real Estate's managing director, recognised the value in the diversity I could bring, but I do think there is still a bias in the industry towards only hiring and promoting people who have ticked those very black and white education and experience boxes."

Looking to the future

Briar emphasises that diversity of gender, background, experience, culture and age brings strength to an organisation and its decision making.

"Every diverse person we add to the decision-making process ensures those decisions are more rigorous, robust and defensible, and easier to explain to clients. When everyone thinks the same, we are more likely to miss opportunities and risks, and to miscalculate. We need different views and perspectives and for more people to be given a voice."

Career lessons

- ▶ Look for strong leaders. "I've always been strategic and patiently waited for the right role with the right leaders. The reason I came to work at QIC was because I wanted to work with Steve Leigh, a great leader."
- ▶ Be bold. "I think women tend to apply for roles only when they think they are capable of doing all of the role straight away - they don't take a chance when there is an element of the role they have to grow into. There are times in my career when I haven't put myself forward as much as I should have, because I didn't have a Bachelor of Real Estate Economics, for example. That's probably held me back - I used stepping stones when I should have leaped."

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"I always loved the idea of creating and shaping things. Property is tangible, and it's wonderful to work with something you can touch, feel and see. Each asset has its own characteristics, and so many skills go into running and building real assets. I find that fascinating."

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Case study

“Diversity brings together different dynamics and skills that add value to our relationships with our clients.”

Rachel Coates

Associate Director - Student Accommodation, Savills

An experienced valuer with more than a decade’s experience in both Australia and the United Kingdom, Rachel Coates is one of the nation’s foremost specialists in the emerging student accommodation sector.

Rachel holds a Bachelor of Commerce, with First Class Honours, from the University of Birmingham and a post graduate diploma with the UK’s College of Estate Management.

The journey

All it took was two weeks’ work experience for Rachel’s career path to change.

With her sights set on becoming a lawyer, Rachel was placed at the local solicitor’s office in her home town in Somerset, England.

“I watched a murder trial, which was the highlight of an otherwise dry week. But there was a second week to fill, and my school didn’t know what to do with me. There was an estate agency across the road that was willing to take me on. I found that I really enjoyed real estate - the work was interesting and I liked dealing with the clients,” Rachel says.

A summer job for four years followed. “They kept encouraging me to get into property, but I had started a Bachelor of Commerce and wanted to get into management,” she explains.

This career in management was short-lived. “Soon after starting my first job, I realised it wasn’t for me. I rethought my career, spoke to recruiters, made some calls and within 24 hours of an interview I’d landed a job.” The job was with King Sturge, one of the UK’s largest real estate firms which was later to merge with JLL.

With her broad academic background in business, law, accounting and finance, Rachel had many transferrable

and bankable skills, and the four years spent at the local estate agency demonstrated “I was comfortable dealing with clients”.

Defining moments

Four-and-a-half years of a happy career followed, and Rachel reflects that she felt “very supported”.

“King Sturge paid for me to complete a post-graduate diploma in property, and I got study days to do so.”

Working in valuation, studying and obtaining her RICS valuation qualifications at the same time demanded single-minded determination. “I finished my diploma, took a deep breath and thought about my lifetime goals,” she says. And being just 26-year-old, travel beckoned.

“I had never been to Australia, but I just booked a flight. I thought if I didn’t find a job in Australia, I’d still have the time of my life.”

That was 2012 - and it took Rachel just a month to secure a job in Sydney. Within six months she was back working with JLL, something she recognises was “lucky”.

The move wasn’t without its challenges, and Rachel had to take a few steps back before moving forward.

“I had just 12 months of RICS post-qualification

experience, which wasn't enough to get reciprocity with the Australian Property Institute in Australia. It was a challenge not being able to move straight into valuation. But I took a step back to look at how I could position myself into the role I wanted."

Rachel had worked with student accommodation specialist Conal Newland in the UK, and when he was brought over from the UK to bolster JLL's student accommodation offering, Rachel jumped at the chance to work with him again.

"Not having my full valuation accreditation in Australia wasn't an issue for Conal. Neither was the fact that I didn't have student accommodation experience. He was willing to support me because he knew what I was capable of."

After two years, another defining moment presented itself after Savills approached Conal and Rachel to "bring the team across". The move came with a promotion, "which enabled me to step into my own light".

Property's potential for women

Rachel says Savills has been "fantastic in supporting me and females in the business", and points to leadership training and its emphasis on diversity of cultures, backgrounds and genders as examples. She is enthusiastic about property's potential for women, too.

"It's such a multi-faceted industry. I am in valuation, but there is nothing to stop me from moving into agency work or leasing. Once you're in this industry there are so many opportunities to shake things up."

Why diversity delivers

While Rachel says she was surprised by the lack of diversity in Australia's property industry when she first moved Down Under, leaders are undoubtedly taking action.

"I was one of only two qualified female valuers in New South Wales at first. But I saw a real improvement during my time with JLL. Within 12 months there were five or six female valuers. I saw JLL's management really looking for ways to support women in the business."

Rachel says diversity is at the heart of her own team's success. "Diversity brings together different dynamics and skills that add value to our relationships with our clients."

Looking to the future

Rachel urges other women not to short-change themselves or their abilities.

"If there are 10 attributes on a job description, and a man can do five, he'll put his hand up for a role being positive he can learn the other five. While a woman will say 'I can't do everything on that list', so I won't apply. We are more likely to undersell ourselves - which explains why more agents are male.

"But if we want this to change the status quo we have to start putting our hands up. I'm learning to do this, so watch this space."

Career lessons

- ▶ Look at the big picture before you specialise. "I encourage young people to secure a graduate role that allows them to move around teams. That way you can work out which parts of property you enjoy most."
- ▶ Always add value. "I've always tried to make myself indispensable. I've put my hand up to help with extra-curricular activities, whether that's being part of a RICS committee or chairing the API's NSW Young Property Professionals committee."
- ▶ Learn to love networking. "Networking is important for everyone - and ultimately it helps to establish your personal brand." Try to be of service to others, Rachel adds. "If you are helpful and knowledgeable, you will be the person they call."



"It's such a multi-faceted industry. I am in valuation, but there is nothing to stop me from moving into agency work or leasing. Once you're in this industry there are so many opportunities to shake things up."





Case study

“I really appreciate the diversity of roles in the property industry. You can move very easily into different disciplines. I think I was a better developer because I’d worked in a centre and understood the customers’ requirements.”

Lillian Fadel

Group General Manager of Centre Experience, Scentre Group

With a diverse background in retail spanning risk, workplace health and safety, operations, development and centre management, Lillian Fadel has worked with Westfield, Dexu and Scentre Group.

Lillian holds a Bachelor of Civil Engineering from the University of New South Wales, and an Executive MBA from the University of Technology Sydney.

The journey

With a family background in construction, Lillian always liked the idea of a career in property.

“My parents were migrants and encouraged all four of their children to get a good education. I originally thought I’d do accounting, but Dad talked me out of it. He wanted me to become a builder, because he was one, and because he thought I could create my own business.

“I had completed work experience at a construction company, and I thought engineering made sense. But it wasn’t long into my degree that I realised engineering was not for me. The challenge at the time was I had no idea what else to do, so I decided the best thing to do was to finish my degree,” Lillian says.

On graduating, Lillian responded to an advertisement calling for graduate risk managers and soon found herself working for an insurance company. “I saw this as an opportunity to get my foot in the door,” she explains.

It was only during further post-graduate studies, while exploring the subject of workplace health and safety, that Lillian connected with a fellow student who worked at Westfield. “He was looking for someone to help set up their OHS systems. And that was my introduction into property.”

Lillian began working with teams across Westfield’s centres, learning the ropes of retail.

“The people I worked with were facilities and shopping centre managers and I got a real appreciation of what they did - from cleaning and security to air-conditioning, retailer relations and customer experience. The whole thing.”

A role in operations at a Westfield centre soon followed before the national operations manager announced his retirement and Lillian put her hand up. “Suddenly, I was setting the strategy for facilities management and procurement for all our centres nationally,” she says.

After three years as Westfield’s national operations manager, Lillian was ready for another challenge, and so took on the role of centre manager at Westfield’s Mount Druitt shopping centre.

“The centre was about to undergo a redevelopment and I could see this would give me exposure to a side of the business I had limited exposure to. At the time, many people were surprised that I would give up a national role to be based at one centre.”

The decision proved a smart one, and within two years Lillian was appointed to the development team as the only female.

Defining moments

At this point in her career, Lillian had undergone unsuccessful IVF treatment, and was urged by her doctor to try again. Despite the odds, Lillian found herself pregnant with twins.

"I'd only been in the development role for three months when I fell pregnant. I took parental leave in November 2006, and I know some people thought I wouldn't come back, but I was back at work three-and-a-half months later. And then in June 2007 I found out I was 19 weeks pregnant - not planned. I took another two months off. I had three boys a year and six days apart."

Lillian says this was perhaps the toughest phase of her career.

"It was personally a very happy time, but professionally it was pretty tough. I never felt that I would lose my job, but it was hard to hear people's opinions on how they thought my pregnancy would impact other females' opportunities to join the development team. It was a really, really difficult time because I felt that I had let females down."

Returning to work after the birth of her third son was no picnic either. "I was sleep deprived and without the help of my parents I still don't know how I could have done it. Ultimately, though, if you want to do something you can make it happen," she says.

Property's potential for women

Westfield had given Lillian a richly rewarding career. "But I got to the point where I needed new challenges. I moved to Dexus, Westfield's biggest joint venture partner, to become head of retail development.

"I left for all the right reasons, and I loved working for Dexus. It exposed me to senior leaders, boards and directors, and opportunities I would never have had otherwise. It taught me to think bigger and broader."

After 18 months Lillian returned to Scentre Group as general manager of development and strategic asset management with "an even broader understanding of the property industry".

"I really appreciate the diversity of roles in the property industry. You can move very easily into different disciplines. I think I was a better developer because I'd worked in a centre and understood the customers' requirements. Diversifying my skills allowed me to have a greater appreciation of the business model in its totality."

Driving the diversity agenda

When it comes to women in leadership roles, Lillian concedes we've "got a long way to go".

"Just promoting someone into a role isn't enough. You might be eager to get more female representation in senior roles, but you must back that up with support.

"I've always been fortunate to have leaders, that happened to be all males, that cared about me and my career. They weren't just mentors. A mentor can give advice, but sometimes you need an advocate - someone who says: 'we back her'.

"When I look back at my career, there were a number of occasions when I was not the first choice for a role. Sometimes I wasn't even the second or third choice. People often look at a person's ability in the context of their title, but I have always thought in the context of diversity of experience and thought - and that's been central to my career journey."

Career lessons

- ▶ Look laterally. "I'm always curious and I want to learn new things. I have cared less about climbing the career ladder vertically and more interested in furthering and growing my skill set."
- ▶ Be true to yourself. "If you always do what people expect you to do, rather than what's right for you, you'll always be disappointed."
- ▶ Back yourself. "There have been plenty of times in my career when I've thought 'what have I done?' But if you wait until you have more experience you may miss the opportunity. Don't get caught up in worrying about whether you have the right technical skill set. Think about what you can bring to the table."



"A mentor can give advice, but sometimes you need an advocate - someone who says: 'we back her'."





Case study

“We genuinely get better outcomes when we have diverse teams. Seventy-five per cent of retail customers are women, and 95 per cent of buying choices are made by females. If you don’t have women providing their input into the way we build, we get things wrong.”

Louise Mason

Group Executive and CEO Commercial Property, Stockland

President of the NSW division of the Property Council, Louise Mason joined Stockland in June 2018 to lead the group’s commercial property business, after two and a half years as chief operating officer of AMP Capital Real Estate.

Highlights of Louise’s career include defining AMP Capital’s significant development pipeline and leading the \$2 billion regeneration project, Quay Quarter Sydney.

Louise holds a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Laws (with Honours) from Macquarie University.

The journey

“Like most people, I didn’t know that a career in property existed,” Louise says.

“I knew that I didn’t want to practice law, but I saw my degree as a point of difference”. After landing a graduate position in the minerals section with the Hooker Corporation, Louise took a retail property management role with Lendlease in 1989.

The role proved a perfect training ground. “I managed a fresh food market and was face-to-face with ‘mum and dad’ retailers who had their houses on the line if their businesses failed,” she says.

“After studying law, where everything is black and white, this was my first lesson working in the grey.”

Moving up in the ranks in Lendlease, Louise held management roles in development, asset management and investment, before joining AMP Capital in 2005 as head of development for shopping centres.

By 2010, she was managing director of AMP Capital’s office and industrial division, heading one of the largest in-house asset, property and development management teams in Australia.

Defining moments

Moving from retail to office and industrial was a “career defining move” Louise says.

“I wasn’t sure I could do it, but AMP Capital’s then head of property Adam Tindall (now CEO) believed in me, and told me it was ‘just another sector.’” This advice proved prescient, and Louise has since embraced new portfolios and sectors with ease.

Louise also credits her education at Macquarie University as career shaping. In a tutorial-based learning environment, “you had to learn to speak up”, she says. While this was initially a challenge, with time and the encouragement of her third-year tutor, Louise learnt “that it’s important to put your ideas out there when you have something relevant to say, and you don’t always have to be right to have an opinion”.

This lesson served her well when she joined Lendlease. “The company philosophy at the time was all about throwing people in, giving them enough rope and teaching them to put their hands up when they needed help - but making sure they are offering some solutions too,” she says.

“This is something I’ve always tried to do with my teams.”

Property's potential for women

Louise points to the “tangible and relatable nature” of property as one of its great attractors. “Everyone is part of a community and uses buildings every day.”

The broad scope of career choice is also a plus. “It’s an industry with many career choices. I hope our industry is giving people more flexibility too, to dip in and out while they have children or do something different for a while.”

Why diversity delivers

As she’s risen through the ranks, Louise says she has always looked for diversity of thought.

“We genuinely get better outcomes when we have diverse teams. Seventy-five per cent of retail customers are women, and 95 per cent of buying choices are made by females. If you don’t have women providing their input into the way we build, we get things wrong,” she adds.

This is a message that resonates not just for gender balance, but also across generations too, and she says the input of millennials is “incredibly important”.

“It doesn’t matter if you are the least experienced person in the room, property is something we all experience - and a graduate’s opinion can be just as valuable as someone with 30 years’ in the business.”

Looking to the future

While Louise is concerned about the number of women who drop out of the industry mid-career, she says the secret to supporting women is flexibility.

Parental leave and flexible working are now a “given” not just at Stockland, but across a host of companies and industries. “The conversation has to be about flexibility for everyone,” she adds.

When Louise started her own family, her husband took time off, something she says was “quite ground breaking at the time”. She acknowledges that many women “looking up the ranks worry whether they could do it, so we need a range of models of flexibility for both men and women”.

Attracting young talent is also mission critical. “I do believe that women need to foster and support other women and be quite deliberate about it,” she says.

Programs like Girls in Property play an important role in the industry’s future, Louise says, and recounts her own experience of talking to parents of her daughter’s friends. “One woman told me her daughter wanted to be a town

planner, but she had discouraged it as she’d get better leave if she became a teacher. Our challenge is not just to show girls in year 10 that there are careers in property, but their parents too.”

Employers need to widen their net when it comes to capturing talent.

“It’s just as important to go to the psychology school as the engineering school. We need people from all backgrounds. Technical skills are needed in parts of the business, but people skills are necessary in others - and as you rise up the ranks, people skills are often the most important.”

Career lessons

- ▶ Being willing to participate “whether that’s within your own organisation, taking a position with a Property Council committee or getting out there and networking”.
- ▶ Leaders often “forget how much a real-life example means to others. We all cast a long shadow - remember that and make your example a positive one.”
- ▶ Working with a diverse team can be challenging. “It does add time when you are thinking through different points of view, but the outcome will be more robust.”

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“It doesn’t matter if you are the least experienced person in the room, property is something we all experience - and a graduate’s opinion can be just as valuable as someone with 30 years’ in the business.”

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Case study

“CEOs have made great efforts to embed diversity practices within their businesses beyond lip service.”

Anastasia Clarke

Chief Financial Officer, The GPT Group

One of only 11 female CFOs in an ASX 100 company, Anastasia Clarke is responsible for The GPT Group’s capital management, financial reporting, accounting, tax, technology and business services. Anastasia was named one of Asia’s 25 most influential women in finance and treasury and ranked first in the Corporate Confidence Index for capital management among the top ASX 50 public companies.

Anastasia sits on the board of the Property Council, chairs its Capital Markets division council and holds a Bachelor of Accounting with Distinction from the University of Technology, Sydney. Anastasia is a Fellow of the Australian Society of Certified Practising Accountants and a Fellow of Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand.

The journey

Anastasia’s entry into the property industry was far more deliberate than many of her female peers. With four girls to raise, Anastasia’s father - a trained carpenter come farmer - “channelled all his energy into encouraging us to believe that the world was our oyster”.

“Dad always loved property and traded in it. And he passed this love on to me.”

With her father’s encouragement, Anastasia undertook work experience in two commercial agencies while still at school, and soon “I had my eye on a property degree at RMIT”.

“And then in Year 11 I started studying accounting. I loved my teacher, who was an ex-auditor from EY, and she inspired me to become an accountant.”

A stellar student, Anastasia was named Dux of her school in Year 12 and was awarded a scholarship which took her to Sydney to study accounting.

“I chose my first internship with Lendlease because I still liked property, and at the end of my three-year degree, I joined Lendlease’s graduate program. Within a year, I

knew where I wanted to go.” And that wasn’t traditional accounting.

“I begged for a role that required five years’ experience in treasury. I remember thinking after my first week that I was out of my depth, but I pushed myself way out of my comfort zone. This was a gamechanger for me and laid a significant foundation stone for me to become a CFO.”

Defining moments

In 2001, Anastasia moved to Dexu, initially to establish the treasury function as Group Treasurer and later as Head of Finance, the most senior finance position at that time.

“As Group Treasurer I started from scratch, and soon realised my colleagues wanted me not just to present the options, but to make the decisions and set the policies. It was a big lesson. Dexu was my first entrée into a senior role where people leaned on me.”

After two heads of finance left the company in relatively quick succession, Anastasia says “I knew I could do better”.

"I was six months pregnant with my first child when the head of finance role was open, and I put my hand up. Mark Ford was CEO of Dexus at the time, and I had his backing. He was truly ahead of his time. But I also don't know many women who push that hard when they are six months pregnant."

Property's potential for women

"People love the tangibility of property. And it's one of the last industries to be disrupted by technology," she says, adding that it's ripe with opportunities for bright young minds.

Anastasia would like to see more role models for young girls, so that they understand the rich and rewarding careers on offer in property, including "smart buildings, automation and robotics".

"The Property Council's Girls in Property and 500 Women in Property programs are crucial, as are university roadshows that demonstrate our industry is far more than plumbers, bricklayers and real estate agents. And I think universities need to be lobbied to create more property degrees, as property is one of Australia's largest industry employers."

Why diversity delivers

Anastasia says the industry's leaders understand that diversity of thought is important for their businesses.

"CEOs have made great efforts to embed diversity practices within their businesses beyond lip service, and the fact that it's now called parental leave, not maternity leave, speaks volumes."

The GPT Group now offers male and female employees up to two years primary carers leave (with 16 weeks on full pay and compulsory superannuation for the first 12 months) within two years of the birth or placement of the child. The initiative, driven by GPT Group CEO and PMCC Bob Johnston, was seen as a way to encourage fathers to also take leave - often around the time their partners were concluding their initial 12-month period of parental leave and were re-engaging with the workforce.

"This is not a women's issue. It's about mums and dads doing this together to parent their children."

Another big change is around flexible working, and she applauds GPT's previous CEO Michael Cameron's early leadership in this area - and a direction that Bob Johnston has "elevated to the next level by embedding flexibility in every employee's way of doing work".

"I don't think there is one person at GPT who wouldn't describe themselves as working flexibly and it wasn't like that when I started in the business nine years ago."

Looking to the future

"The next evolution of 50/50 will only come when the balance of roles tips at the EXCO and leadership levels," Anastasia says.

She says it's "disappointing" that preconceived notions of "what a property person looks like" still exist.

"Unfortunately, there is still a huge bias when men look at a woman in property and see them as 'finance' rather than 'property'. And yet, I've spent my entire 25-year career in property and many senior men in property came from 'finance' and seem to be perceived as 'property'."

"And I think an accountant provides a more prosperous pathway to CEO than an architect, for instance, because you understand how to raise equity and navigate corporate financial structures."

"The Property Male Champions of Change must challenge themselves to give it their best shot to appoint women when senior positions become available. While they do this for external roles, I'm seeing too many internal appointments made without the same rigour and mindset."

Career lessons

- ▶ Don't be afraid to ask for flexibility. "The world has moved on and I think people are more focused on performance and output rather than hours spent at the desk."
- ▶ "We need to scan our organisations for every senior appointment, otherwise we won't change the statistics. And we'll give women the wrong impression about their career prospects and they'll leave."



"I begged for a role that required five years' experience in treasury. I remember thinking after my first week that I was out of my depth, but I pushed myself way out of my comfort zone. This was a gamechanger for me and laid a significant foundation stone for me to become a CFO."





Case study

“When a company places value on outcomes and deliverables - and when these are rewarded - diversity becomes less of a topic for discussion.”

Fiona Mackenzie

General Manager Chadstone, Vicinity Centres

Fiona Mackenzie has steered some of the largest shopping centres in the world, including Westfield Fountain Gate and now Chadstone. Her 16 year career managing Australian shopping centres has included oversight of centre strategy, marketing, operations, security, retail management, finance and human resources.

Fiona holds a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Business - Marketing from Swinburne University of Technology.

The journey

Fond childhood memories of trips to Westfield Southland in Melbourne's south-east drove Fiona's passion for the property industry.

With a degree in marketing and Japanese under her belt, Fiona set off to see the world and spent much of her 20s travelling before returning to Australia and decided it was time to settle down and start a serious career.

“I wanted to work with something that was ‘alive’ and I'd always loved shopping centres. I wasn't so much interested in property as working in a field that was fun and dynamic, and suited to my personality. So, I wrote to every major landlord in the country and told them why they should employ me.”

Westfield responded, and Fiona landed her first job as an assistant marketing manager at Westfield Fountain Gate.

“It was in the middle of the Kath and Kim era and I absolutely loved it. We were among some of Melbourne's fastest growing suburbs with a marketing team organising everything from fashion parades to Santa. We could draw a crowd whether we were opening an envelope or bringing in a celebrity. There wasn't much not to like.”

Fiona was committed to stay with Westfield and could see opportunity for her to grow but admits “marketing would only satisfy me to a point.” Westfield's culture was about “results and accountability”, Fiona says. “I was more than

happy to work hard. The results followed and with those results came more opportunities.”

Consistent promotions followed, first into management before a short stint in Hong Kong had her departing Westfield, although it lasted less than a year. “Westfield brought me back to lead the team at a much higher level - taking on the role of centre manager at Fountain Gate, which was at the time its largest asset. I'll never say I was lucky - I worked hard and was tenacious - but the leaders trusted me.”

Defining moments

It wasn't all smooth sailing, though. An incident at Fountain Gate drew some negative PR and the centre was splashed across the papers in what was a test of Fiona's leadership. “I think my career has been better for being through that difficult time. It steeled me to handle a different kind of business pressure.”

Looking to expand her knowledge of retail, Fiona “pushed” to manage the construction of Westfield Plenty Valley. The decision was questioned by colleagues at the time who “wondered why I'd want to move to one of the smallest assets in the portfolio”.

“But I wanted to be part of a development, the opportunity to work on a greenfield site and impact the community drew me to make the change.

After the opening of Plenty Valley, Westfield restructured the business and Fiona took on a regional manager role leading several sites across Victoria.

“During this period I had my first child, and Westfield’s leaders went out of their way to make it positive. I was relocated to a centre closer to home, was able to build up my days and nothing was too difficult.”

After giving birth to her second child, the transition back to work was, again, “seamless”. But after 12 years with Westfield, it was time to take on new challenges. Fiona joined the Pacific Group of Companies as general manager of its shopping centre portfolio.

Reporting directly to the CEO and chairman, Fiona was responsible for all aspects of centre performance. “Working directly with an individual owner is an amazing opportunity. Conversations were often robust and there were challenges but it was exceptionally rewarding.”

Fiona had her two young daughters at home and had been working at breakneck speed for more than a decade, which is when she decided it was time to pause, to rest and to reassess. She resigned from Pacific Group of Companies at the end of 2015 and took a 10-month break to focus on life at home with her family.

“After a few months I realised I needed to work and I was a much better mother for it.” When Vicinity Centres approached her to manage Chadstone, “I couldn’t pass up the opportunity to lead Chadstone, it is one of the top five shopping, dining and entertainment destinations anywhere in the world,” she says.

Property’s potential for women

“Retail is so exciting, you touch every person in the country, and it never stands still,” Fiona explains. Working in the broader property industry is rewarding because “it’s diverse and dynamic”.

Fiona says her “tenacious, results-driven” approach has helped her throughout her career and she’s never felt a disadvantage as a woman, however she acknowledges business practices must continue to evolve to attract and retain women.

“There are times when I have felt challenged. I often remind my male colleagues that I don’t have a wife at home. But that’s not a company problem, it’s a societal problem,” she admits.

The industry is undoubtedly heading in the right direction, Fiona emphasises.

“Vicinity Centres embraces diversity and has the flexibility required to get results. There is no barrier to flexible work arrangements. The discussion is around outcomes rather than how many hours you are in the office working or whether you leave early on a Tuesday.”

Why diversity delivers

“Diversity is about gender, but also about age, cultural background, sexual orientation and more,” she says. Having a depth of perspectives on a team is essential in retail, she argues.

“When a company places value on outcomes and deliverables - and when these are rewarded - diversity becomes less of a topic for discussion.”

Looking to the future

“I’d like to think that one day we won’t be discussing diversity at all because outcomes are valued higher than inputs,” Fiona adds.

“Generationally, I look to my daughters’ future and I hope the hard yards that have been done, and are being done now, will provide them with opportunities tomorrow.”

Career lessons

- ▶ Be prepared to roll up your sleeves. “Nothing beats grit and hard work,” Fiona says.
- ▶ Value honesty above all. “Honest, open and frank communication has held me in good stead in highly-politicised environments and in sensitive stakeholder engagement roles. The ability to be honest has been at the cornerstone of my success.”
- ▶ Embrace the unknown. Fiona rates her time working on Westfield Plenty Valley among her career highlights. “I gained far more depth to my property knowledge, but more than that, we had such a significant impact on the community that had never before had a shopping centre. When I drive back 10 years after completion and see how it has evolved I feel such pride.”

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“I’ll never say I was lucky - I worked hard and was tenacious - but the leaders trusted me.”

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The Property Council of Australia champions the industry that employs 1.4 million Australians and shapes the future of our communities and cities.

Property Council members invest in, design, build and manage places that matter to Australians: our homes, retirement villages, shopping centres, office buildings, industrial areas, education, research and health precincts, tourism and hospitality venues and more.

On behalf of our members, we provide the research and thought leadership to help decision-makers create vibrant communities, great cities and strong economies.

We support smarter planning, better infrastructure, sustainability, and globally competitive investment and tax settings which underpin the contribution our members make to the economic prosperity and social well-being of Australians.

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