This chapter takes its title from the previous LDW evaluation published in 1998. We have used it again because it lies at the heart of the LDW experience. LDW is about women growing, thriving, belonging and making a place for themselves. It is about women leading, women making decisions, women contributing, women excelling. It is about women overcoming barriers to success and it is about the institution welcoming women and offering equal access to success. It is about both the women and the institution creating opportunities.

The quotes give an indication of this awareness, both from the point of view of the participants and the mentors.

When I reflect on my past experiences at UWA, the importance of LDW as a personal guidepost is obvious. It is true that LDW enables and inspires. One learns to think outside the box and to have the confidence to seize opportunities.

Email - 2000 participant

Being a leader, exercising leadership, achieving career success, clarifying career direction, obtaining promotion, identifying opportunities — these are very different concepts for different groups of staff and different people. It can be difficult to steer away from the notion of career success as being synonymous with climbing the ‘ladder’; this, however, is not the view that LDW promotes. Nor is it the view of many of the women who have participated over the years. Leadership is not something exercised only formally and at certain levels of seniority in the organisation. It can be

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**The LDW programme has broadened my horizons and widened my field of view. There are now wide open vistas in front of me.**

1998 review session

**I feel more confident in my ability to recognise and grab hold of opportunities with both hands and do something with them.**

1998 review session

**What a catalyst - one sees opportunities one never knew existed.**

1998 review session

**When I say the words ‘the LDW programme what is your immediate reaction to that?**

*Opportunity, learning, development, networks and career.*

Female mentor
easy to fall into this mindset by default in a hierarchically organised workplace. Sometimes assumptions are made that have the effect of making some women feel excluded. On the other hand, some women do wish to climb the ‘ladder’ and that can be equally difficult to claim.

It is important to recognise the diversity of women, their life stages and circumstances, their different aspirations. Women in our society, and women in our universities, (Currie & Thiele 2001; Probert et al. 2002) still carry the majority of caring and domestic responsibilities, and the impact of this on their working lives needs to be recognised. It makes it more difficult for women to engage in the ‘workaholism’ that seems integral to ‘success’ in western societies, and which is certainly evident in university life. The adage that ‘women can have it all but they can’t have it all at once’ can be difficult for women themselves to accept and many women (and men) compare women’s career patterns with those of men, and find them wanting. As Baily (2003:139) notes, in relation to academic women, they have great difficulty fitting the “current male model of the ideal academic.” Perhaps in the way we talk of ‘post heroic’ leadership we also need to talk about and build ‘post heroic’ careers.

Chapter 4, in exploring the importance of a ‘critical mass’ of women, argued that it is necessary for this to occur at all levels. It also discussed some of the ‘ingredients’ women require in order to pursue fulfilling careers. This chapter will explore women’s working lives, starting with the research literature, then examining the impact of LDW using survey data and women’s stories and quotes. It will cover some of the less tangible outcomes — connections, networks, visibility, feelings of belonging - alongside the more obvious career changes such as promotions and secondments. In order to make best sense of the different context

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“Well, for most women it is quite common to have a kind of higher level in your career in the second half of it rather than in the first half of it, whereas men would go up quickly and then stay up, so just having the feeling that no, I am not a total failure, it is kind of a normal pattern to do it that way rather than have everything worked out, which is like almost impossible, and so that was a good boost for the morale thinking that no, I am not a totally hopeless case, you know, I can still make it, and I think in some other environments where there is less sensitivity and you expect everyone to do everything at once, you might not have had that kind of support …

Yeah, that’s been great to give a sense of hope, and very good for me to see it from the perspective of a group that’s really analysed women’s needs and has looked at the historical trend and see that there is a slower progress in women’s careers …

In a sense I don’t particularly mind, as long as we are given the opportunity at some point. You know, we may not be able to do everything at once, and have the little babies and the full time career with professorship within five years. No, but having sometime the opportunity to move up I think is great, and this programme supports it tremendously well.

Focus group participant
and the data, parts of the chapter will consider general and academic staff separately.

**General staff**

The term general staff\(^1\) does not do justice to the skills and expertise of this group, and creates the perception of homogeneity. The term professional staff is increasingly being used but is also inadequate for the task. As previously noted, while far less is known about career barriers, career patterns and opportunities for general staff women than for academic women, several more recent studies have included general staff. Castleman et al. (1995), in their NTEU-sponsored study, identified clustering at lower levels, the lack of a career path and lower levels of permanency and seniority for women in comparison to men. Probert, Ewer and Whiting (1998) found a similar pattern in their gender pay equity study, asking the question, ‘why do these differences in level exist?’ Some women appeared to be at a lower classification level than their responsibilities warranted.

> I found it harder with administrative staff, their career prospects are constrained by promotional opportunities and reclassifications.

Female mentor

Unlike academics, who have a clearly delineated promotion path, career paths for general staff are far less tangible. Promotion can occur through successfully applying for a vacancy at a higher level or re-classification. Temporary improvements in status include secondments, while salary progression is a recent innovation at UWA to recognise the skills and contribution of general staff. Currie, Harris and Thiele (1995), in their study of a WA university, found that few general staff planned a career and that women were less likely than men to do so. One of the main reasons cited for being reactive rather than proactive was to allow family or partner to take precedence.

The previous LDW evaluation report, *Creating Opportunities*, found that for general staff the biggest changes in their working lives since LDW were increased visibility and participation in UWA networks (82%), followed by the opportunity to undertake special projects (45%). Changes in working life that participants attributed directly to their programme involvement were secondments (100%), special projects (90%), increased networks, visibility and becoming a mentor (89%) (de Vries 1998:17,19).

The availability of opportunities and the importance of opportunities to general staff careers was highlighted by the Executive Development Programme, run by LDW in 1997/98 for senior women. The programme was project-based and it soon became clear that, while senior academic women had an excess of opportunities available to them, the general staff relished the projects and the opportunities to extend themselves beyond their ‘geographical’ and ‘content expertise’. General staff feel they can become boxed into specialist areas, while having a multitude of generic skills to contribute. Participants at that time wanted to be stretched and have their skills recognised.

**Academic staff**

As outlined in Chapter 4, the early impetus for LDW came from the low presence and status of women in academic ranks in the early 1990s. Under the guidance of Fay Gale, UWA made serious attempts to redress this; one of the most significant of these changes was the progressive overhaul of recruitment, promotion and tenure processes, which has been well documented elsewhere (Eveline 2004; Todd & Bird 2000). Coincidentally Everett (1994:172), in the same year that LDW began, completed a study of four universities, including UWA, and concluded that...
“women hold consistently lower rank than men of comparable age, service, publication and degree qualification”.

Todd and Bird, who interviewed 30 men and 30 women in their 2000 study, comment on LDW as a significant development, noting that it encouraged women to consider and work towards promotion (2000:11). The LDW Creating Opportunities report, based on a survey covering the first three years of LDW, concurred with this. It noted that women reported “LDW influenced both their decision to apply for promotion and the quality of their application” (de Vries 1998:21). They did not attribute their success in achieving promotion to the programme; rather, the issue had been to overcome either the lack of encouragement or sometimes active discouragement.

What of the literature from outside UWA? While Probert, Ewer and Whiting (1998) found many similarities between men and women (valuing of career, research productivity, teaching loads, success in applying for promotion), they also identified a major difference. Male academics are more likely to seek promotion than female academics at a similar level (Probert et al. 1998). Probert, Ewer and Leong (2002) also found this in their UNSW study, noting the cumulative difference this can make over time, becoming particularly marked around the 14 year mark. One of the recommendations of their study is the development of a programme to encourage women to apply for promotion at the same rates as men. They also note that, … as long as men do not have the same levels of family responsibilities as women, current working practices in universities will make it harder for women to maintain the same career development patterns as men (Probert et al. 2002:33).

A lot of the PhD students and the junior research assistants who I deal with, or even junior academic staff, don’t think that LDW is necessary, because things are so good for women, but I thought the same way like 10 years ago when I first started and as you get more senior you start noticing the barriers. When you are more junior it is accepted that women can be junior and they can be academic staff or PhD students and whatever, but it is when you want to break that invisible barrier that you start noticing the differences.

Focus group participant

Lucette Cant is a single mother of two children.

“I was happy just to sit in my job and make a living for my family, until I did LDW,” she said. “Talking to other people made me realise that I was intelligent, that I could do something with my career, and that it wouldn’t jeopardise my family.”

Always categorising herself as an introvert, Lucette surprised herself and others when she took a leading role in her peer learning group’s presentation. “Doing the programme had so boosted my confidence that I could do something like this that I never thought I would do,” she said.

“I didn’t see the importance of networking before I went on the programme. But simply talking to other women about their work/life balance helped me with so many practical things in my life.”

“Then I was offered a secondment by somebody I had gotten to know through LDW. She believed I could do the job, even though it was at a higher level than my own job and it involved learning lots of new skills.

“I was flattered at first. Then I realised that, yes, I did have the confidence to take it up.”

Lucette, who works in Human Resources as an employee relations officer, took up a three month secondment in the School of Population Health. It was work with which she wasn’t familiar. “I had to learn as I went, things like

continued on page 63
The Probert et al. (1998) study also noted differences in women’s level of appointment, holding of a PhD and years of experience in higher education.

Chesterman (2004), in her study of senior academic and general staff in the Technology Network universities, also found differences in the career paths of academic men and women. Men were more likely to be in their current position because they had applied (2/3 of men, 1/3 of women). A larger proportion had applied from outside the institution (30% of men, less than 20% of women), and they were more mobile, both interstate and overseas. The study noted that while promotion procedures may have been improved, more needs to be done.

We have identified issues such as lacking confidence, reticence, ambivalence, seeking balance and resistance (to what are seen as not doable jobs) as playing a part in women’s avoidance of senior jobs (Chesterman 2004:18).

Encouragement, the tap on the shoulder, overcoming discouragement, recognition of talent, peer role modelling and support — these become important in assisting women to seek promotion. It is here that a programme such as LDW makes an impact.

Applying for academic promotion is an information session, initiated by LDW, that is open to all staff. A follow-up Tips for success session has been maintained as women-only, to provide a space for women to discuss aspects of the promotion process that they would not necessarily share in a mixed group. For example, a recently successful candidate related how she wrote her application while on maternity leave, making notes of her achievements when she went out with baby in pram. A second applicant spoke at length about overcoming her reticence to put herself forward for promotion, while the third spoke about dealing with the backlash of being successfully promoted.

Factors that influence career development

Table 8 shows what general and academic respondents view as the primary factor influencing career development. For general staff the most important factor is competence (39%), followed by availability of opportunities (20%) and hard work (16%). Support provided by the supervisor is also seen as important by 10% of the general staff respondents. As expected a different pattern exists for academic staff, with hard work (23%), competence (19%) and publications (16%) as the top three. Securing research grants and teaching (both 9%) are also important. The groups are not directly comparable because academic staff had more options to choose as ways in which they demonstrate competence, such as through publications, research grants and teaching. Apart from this difference, the most important difference between the groups is availability of opportunities, rated more highly by general staff.

While the table above refers to career development and the tables following highlight changes in working life, including promotion, it is important to keep these in context. A focus on the women, (as the problem) as suggested by the Frame 1 approach in Chapter 3, would focus almost exclusively on measures such as promotion, as indicators of programme success. To a large extent this was what occurred in the 1998 Creating Opportunities report, which paid particular attention to issues of promotion, retention, and changes in working life. The evaluation emphasis was strongly focused on what individual women gained from participation. A Frame 4 approach, again as outlined in Chapter 3 demands a different approach. Frame 4, in effect, moves us from an approach focusing on the women to an approach focusing on the organisational culture, where success needs to be measured in cultural change terms. This has become more evident and recognised by the LDW Planning Group over time, as it has continued to grapple with moving from an exclusive focus on the cohort programme to the wider organisational challenge of culture change.
These should not be over-emphasised for a cultural change programme such as LDW, as turning women’s working lives into replicas of men’s is not a sign of cultural change.

This sensitivity to the more qualitative aspects of change can be difficult to maintain. Chapter 4 makes it clear that the LDW programme, although essential to the changes we can map today, is but one part of a wider strategy to make UWA more welcoming to women. It is difficult to separate out the influence of LDW participation on any changes that occur, and such false separation would promote an inadequate understanding of the multiple, and connecting, value-adding components of cultural change. The remainder of this chapter focuses on the difference LDW has made to participants’ working lives within this context. Survey data casts some light on what LDW has achieved. The voices of the women, however, are more powerful in communicating the qualitative differences.

### Changes in working life and their attribution to LDW: Academic women

Table 9 indicates the percentage of academic respondents who indicated that a change in their working life had occurred. Of those who said ‘yes’, the question then asked them to indicate to what degree this was influenced by LDW participation.
All events occurring for more than 10% of respondents have been included in the table and ranked in order of highest occurrence. The scale used ranged from no influence to high influence and only medium and high influence are reported here. It is important to note that women are answering this question in relation to very different time periods, ranging from two to ten years post programme. While it would be expected that women who completed the programme a long time ago would attribute less to programme participation, the scores remain reasonably high.

The events most influenced by the LDW experience have been listed below. The percentages represent the sum of those indicating that LDW participation was of medium or high influence.

- Increased participation in women’s networks/groups (91%)
- Improved work/life balance (73%)
- Provided mentoring support to others (70%)
- Become more pro-active in exercising leadership (69%)
- Increased participation in UWA networks/groups (68%)
- Applied for promotion (64%)
- Increased your profile/visibility at UWA (64%)
- Achieved promotion (59%)

The first item increased participation in women’s networks occurred for relatively few women. More women reported an increased participation in UWA networks (54%), than women’s networks (25%), although both are strongly influenced by LDW participation as can be seen above. The greater occurrence for mixed, rather than women-only networks, runs counter to criticisms that women-only programmes lead to increased segregation. As a measure of cultural change it also has some value, since it could mean that women are, in their opinion, less ghettoised than they were in 1990 when Fay Gale arrived as Vice-Chancellor to comment that ‘women spoke behind closed doors’ (Eveline 2004:56).

TABLE 9 Occurrence of events/changes and LDW influence on these for academic women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Medium influence</th>
<th>High influence</th>
<th>Med/High combined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attended a conference/s</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided mentoring support to others</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Become more pro-active in exercising leadership</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied for a research grant/s</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased your profile/visibility at UWA</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secured a research grant/s</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased participation in University committees</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied for promotion</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied for study leave</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received study leave</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieved promotion</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Become more strategic in committee involvement</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased participation in UWA networks/groups</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received higher duties</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed other training courses</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved work/life balance</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased participation in national or state committees</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renegotiation of your workload</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased participation in women’s networks/groups</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the impact of the programme on application for promotion (64%) is expected, impact on success in achieving promotion (59%) is positive and somewhat surprising. In the Creating Opportunities report, two thirds of academic women who applied for promotion attributed their decision to do so to their participation in the programme but, not surprisingly, fewer women attributed their success in achieving promotion to the programme. They accredited their success to their own achievements, as is borne out by Table 8 where competence and hard work are nominated as the two most influential factors on career development.
Becoming more pro-active in exercising leadership and providing mentor support occurred for more than 80% of respondents. They also attributed high influence to participation in the programme. This translation of the programme to practical leadership outcomes confirms that the programme is meeting its objective of leadership development.

Additionally, for the 44% of women who indicated they had improved their work/life balance, 73% were influenced by the programme. This is clearly a critical and growing issue for the University (as has been explored in Chapter 4) and one about which women, carrying a disproportionate amount of the domestic and caring responsibilities, feel strongly.

LDW is also influencing committee involvement. Committee membership is always a difficult decision for academic women for it is easy to become overcommitted to committee work, as the University struggles to correct historical gender imbalance. Respondents reported changes in increased participation in University committees (65%), become more strategic in committee involvement (57%) and increased participation in national or state committees (36%) with combined medium/high influence scores of between 43-48%.

For academic women, many of the events in Table 2 are those which would be expected to occur in an academic career, such as attending conferences, applying for research grants and taking study leave. It is interesting, however, that even these events are influenced by LDW participation. For example, 21% of the women who received study leave attributed medium or high programme influence to their success.

Changes in working life and their attribution to LDW: General staff women

Table 10 indicates the percentage of general staff women for whom a change in working life had occurred since programme participation. Those who responded ‘yes’ were asked to what degree this was influenced by LDW participation. Data presented in the table below includes all those changes that occurred for more than 10% of respondents.

The programme has been most influential for general staff (based on combining medium and high influence ratings) on:

- Increased participation in UWA networks/groups (84%)
- Become more strategic in committee involvement (83%)
- Become more pro-active in exercising leadership (80%)
- Increased your profile/visibility at UWA (80%)

Personal Story

Before she turned 40, Susan Prescott was Head of School of Paediatrics and Child Health, had been promoted to Associate Professor, and was the recipient of a prestigious NHMRC Career Development Award.

She is the sort of person who probably would have achieved all these eventually without the help of the Leadership Development for Women programme, but Susan says LDW gave her confidence to do things her way.

“The way I deal with my staff and students has always been collaborative and consultative but LDW reinforced that and confirmed for me that a peculiarly female pattern of leadership – being generous with my time and resources – pays off. If you give people respect and autonomy, they work hard for you in return, and we are all more productive and efficient as a team.”

Susan said she heard about LDW at a staff orientation session soon after she joined UWA.

“It was 1999 and, although the programme had been going for a few years, nobody in my department had heard of it. But I heard from some inspiring women at that orientation morning and decided to apply to do the programme.”

“Working off campus (at the School of Paediatrics and Child Health, which is based at Princess Margaret Hospital) I felt a bit isolated.
MORE THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS

- Improved work/life balance (79%)
- Provided mentoring support to others (78%)
- Renegotiation of your workload (76%)
- Increased participation in women’s networks/groups (73%)
- Increased participation in University committees (70%)
- Applied for a secondment (70%).

It should be noted that general staff tended to rate the influence of LDW participation on changes in their working lives more highly than academic staff. As expected, the profile of events and changes in working life are different between staff groups. Obtaining research grants and study leave do not feature, committee work is somewhat less prominent, and secondments are now a feature.

Those events that occurred for more than 70% of general staff women, and that were strongly influenced (80% or more) by programme participation, were increased participation in UWA networks/groups, increased your profile/visibility at UWA and become more pro-active in exercising leadership. For general staff this participation across the University is important, changing the ‘being employed by a school or faculty’ mentality to one of ‘being employed by the University’. It is an important precursor to mobility and opportunity. Applying for secondments and achieving secondments is also part of this broadening perspective process, which occurred for just over a third of women, and which was also influenced by LDW participation (70% and 66% respectively). Committee involvement, where general staff can be under-utilised, also increased for this group. Increased participation in University committees (51%) and more strategic committee involvement (49%) are both strongly influenced by LDW (70% and 83% respectively). Participation in national or state committees, which is less common for general staff, occurred for few staff and the level of influence was much less (43%).

### TABLE 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Medium influence</th>
<th>High influence</th>
<th>Med/High combined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Become more pro-active in exercising leadership</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased participation in UWA networks/groups</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased your profile/visibility at UWA</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided mentoring support to others</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended a conference/s</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied for promotion</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received higher duties</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed other training courses</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased participation in University committees</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieved promotion</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Become more strategic in committee involvement</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved work/life balance</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied for a secondment</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieved a secondment</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased participation in women’s networks/groups</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renegotiation of your workload</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>76</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enrolled in further formal study</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>49</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased participation in national or state committees</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interestingly, networking changes for general staff mirror those for academic women. UWA networks increased more than women’s networks. The influence of LDW on increased networks for general staff, however, is greater for UWA networks in comparison to academic women and much less for women’s networks than for academic women. This would suggest that pre-existing networks may be different for the two staff groups.
Improved work/life balance occurred for 42% of the respondents and re-negotiated workload for 20% of them. The influence of the programme on these changes, however, is high (79% and 76% respectively).

Becoming more pro-active in leadership and provision of mentoring support are changes that have occurred for many academic and general staff respondents, although for a slightly smaller percentage of general staff. The influence of the LDW programme on both items is rated at a higher level for general staff (80% and 78%).

Clearly for academic and general staff women there are a variety of changes in their working lives that have occurred since programme participation, and respondents indicated that many of these have been influenced by that participation. Benefits include:

- Career building such as networks and visibility
- Increased contributions such as exercising leadership, mentoring, and committee participation
- Career steps such as promotions, higher duties and secondments, and
- Improvements to working life such as improved work/life balance and renegotiated workload.

LDW is clearly seen by respondents as being effective in assisting general and academic staff women in major changes and events in their work lives.

**Career foundations, career building and career steps**

In analysing the comments from participants, provided primarily through emails, re-union lunches and review lunches (which are held for each group approximately nine months after completing the programme), it was obvious there was a wealth of information regarding their working lives and careers. In addition to picking up and exploring further the themes of career building and career steps identified from Tables 9 and 10, there is an additional theme which can be called ‘career foundations’.

**Career foundations: directions, confidence and belonging**

‘Career foundations’ is used here to refer to those attitudes, feelings or behaviours that are precursors to building a career at UWA. Again, that notion of career is not used here to imply progress up the ladder, but is used as a way of talking about a rich and fulfilling working life where women are able to develop their potential and make a full contribution through their work. Women commented on having a sense of career at UWA that was previously not clear or possible prior to LDW.

I wanted a sense of belonging, to meet people and to find out what they were doing in other areas. I had a curiosity about the University and felt very strongly that I wanted to belong, especially given my connections.”

(Susan’s grandfather was Sir Stanley Prescott, a former Vice-Chancellor, and her grandmother, Lady Prescott, was actively involved with St. Catherine’s College for many years.)

At that stage, Susan was a senior lecturer and said she hadn’t given any thought to promotion within five years.

“But Alan Robson addressed the LDW group and emphasised that the University recognised that in many schools women were often more involved in teaching than research, so did not have so many papers published. He said that this should not deter women from seeking promotion, because the criteria for promotion had broadened to recognise this.

“And that got me thinking. I had a serious research background but I was at that time more involved in teaching, so I wasn’t thinking about promotion because the people around me had fixed ideas on what you had to have on your CV before you could apply for promotion.

“LDW gave me the confidence to keep on doing things a little differently from my mostly male colleagues. So I applied for promotion to Associate Professor, and was successful.”

**PERSONAL STORY**

**CREATING OPPORTUNITIES**

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LDW provided support and encouragement and the opportunity to take control of my circumstances and turn them into a career I never anticipated in my wildest dreams.
Reunion lunch

I feel very much in control of what I am doing, where I am going/ could go, what I can improve on, etc — before LDW I wouldn’t have had the same clarity of thought.
Email

I realised “life is short”. That I’d better take charge of my life if I want to achieve my goals.
Reunion lunch

Alongside this were comments regarding an increased sense of empowerment or confidence to achieving these careers.

The programme gave me a real sense of feeling valued, of knowing that there were opportunities out there, of personal empowerment.
1998 review session

[I realised] that I needed to step forward to help make the changes I wanted.
Reunion lunch

[I found this programme to be] immensely affirming and extremely useful to my career.
2001 review session

[LDW] has given me the confidence to try new things and to think constructively about how I want my life and career to be.
Reunion lunch

Another important component to laying the foundations for a career were the cluster of comments relating to ‘belonging’ at UWA, to finding a place, a niche for oneself. Issues of inclusion and exclusion in the academy have been extensively explored in the literature in regard to academic women, and is closely related to women’s traditional exclusion from informal mentoring and networks (Bailyn 2003; Brooks 1997; Ramsay 2000; Bagilhole & White 2003). This capacity for minority or non-dominant groups in the workplace to ‘belong’ is an important indicator of the workplace climate, and a critical part of women thriving in the University.

Being part of LDW enhances the sense of belonging to a much wider and most delightful group of people at UWA.
Reunion lunch

My contacts at UWA have opened up and given me a sense of being part of a community.
Reunion lunch

[LDW helped my sense of belonging] - this can be liberating and empowering.
Reunion lunch

Now I think I have made my niche - I still sometimes feel like an outsider, but not nearly as much as I used to.
Reunion lunch
In some instances this sense of broader belonging can help offset unwelcoming local cultures in schools or work areas.

Being with a positive group has really helped improve my sense of place at UWA, which balances the often negative and unsupported environment in my own department.

1999 review session

Career building: networking and connecting

Having laid the foundations, clearly there are some building blocks that are important. The women themselves make this connection.

LDW participants are more visible and network better and so are offered more opportunities. And it is the taking up of those opportunities, like secondments for special projects, that ultimately leads to promotion within the system.

Visibility and networking within the University are important, particularly for general staff women, to gain access to opportunities. For some women networking instrumentally, rather than socially, is a mystery. As has already been seen, improved mixed and women’s networks are an outcome for a majority of participants. The literature suggests (Hemmati 2000) that mixed networks have greater positive impact on careers than women-only networks.

I mean I don’t have personal links here, and I do feel a bit different from maybe Australian women, because I know I don’t think exactly in the same way when we talk about things. So it helped me to understand perhaps a little bit better, this idea of a network, which I certainly didn’t have when I first arrived here.

Focus group participant

The networks and friendships formed have been the most long-lasting benefit of the programme for me.

Reunion lunch

The networking experience was wonderful.

1998 review session

Career steps: priorities, promotion, secondments

For academic women, many of whom have an excess of opportunities, it is important to be able to prioritise and make space as part of taking career steps.

Her promotion was a very visible outcome of the LDW programme, but Susan also felt enriched by meeting women from all over the University, several of whom she still stays in touch with. “The programme was a wonderful opportunity to take time out of the office, to feel I was getting my head above water and to take time to actively reflect. It taught me about the importance of reflection and reinforced the need for creativity in strategic thinking.”

Although it was not connected to LDW, Susan said that another staff development course has enhanced this aspect of her working life. “I enrolled in a course on journal writing, thinking that it was about writing for scientific journals. It turned out to be personal journal writing, but it was very useful and that skill became an active avenue for reflection for me.”

“There was no direct connection to LDW, but it was a personal development course that I attended and I found it very useful. It taught me about the importance of reflection and reinforced the need for creativity in strategic thinking.”

“Now and then I pick up my journal and write about work, home, my feelings and thoughts; sometimes I even draw fun pictures of myself and how I’m feeling and what I’m doing. It helps to create some perspective for me and, surprisingly, it is one of the most useful things that I’ve carried with me.”

Susan was appointed Head of the School of Paediatrics and Child Health Care at the end of 2002 and says she found this was a very rewarding experience. She was then subsequently awarded a five-year NH&MRC Career Development Award (and her fifth

continued on page 71
I have become better at saying ‘No’ and had several more publications last year. I don’t think I would have achieved these without the motivation and skills that LDW gave me.

Email

LDW is a programme that continues beyond the time commitments and has helped me gain a measure of control over my life as an academic.

2002 review session

Applying for promotion can also be a formidable step. Often women have what is required to be successful in achieving promotion, but they are more reticent than men. Encouraging women to apply is an important LDW achievement.

Thank you for your great programme - it gave me the confidence and the necessary knowledge to apply [for promotion].

Email

I don’t think I would have gone for my recent promotion if it had not been for the encouragement and support from you [Jen] and the LDW’ers.

Email

[If it wasn’t for LDW] I would still feel a sense of isolation, and I wouldn’t have the tools and strategies for promotion.

Reunion lunch

For general staff women networking and visibility are more critical for achieving secondments, and these can often prepare women for promotion.

Many of the women who have participated in LDW have been promoted, as can be seen from the respondent quotes and stories reported in this publication and survey responses reported in Tables 9 and 10. It is difficult to know, however, if promotion rates have improved as a result of LDW participation without making some comparisons with a control group. An appropriate statistical analysis is unavailable for this publication. There is a rich and unique source of data, however, accumulated over the ten years of the programme, which may at some future date be analysed to cast some light on the impact of LDW on promotion.

Retention and moving on

Retention is an important consideration for any employer and it forms part of the University’s priority objective. Losing staff is expensive in terms of replacement costs and the loss of institutional knowledge. High turnover is often an indication of an unsupportive workplace culture; conversely, retention can be an indicator of a welcoming workplace climate. The impact of LDW on women’s sense of belonging and their capacity to build a satisfying career has a flow-on effect to retention.

I would not be still working here if it was not for LDW.

Reunion lunch
[If it hadn’t been for LDW] I would not be at this desk typing. I’d be at another desk typing, but more than likely not at UWA.

Reunion lunch

The only one thing I considered worth staying for here at UWA was the LDW programme.

Email

The LDW programme also encourages women to expand their horizons. Staying at UWA is not always the best career move for LDW participants. It is important to acknowledge that, for some women to succeed, they need to be mobile and take up opportunities that arise elsewhere. Senior management is well aware of this and is prepared to see UWA take a leadership role for the wider benefit of higher education, allowing LDW to play a helping hand in women’s mobility.

[LDW has] given me an understanding of my self worth, the means for improving myself and for solving problems in the workplace, and an ability to articulate my skills to other people in a confident manner.

Email from participant, on leaving UWA

[On her appointment as inaugural Head of School at another university] It has been a “hair raising ride and a leap of faith” to move from my position and comfort zone of 27 years at UWA to contract employment in a private institution. LDW played an important role in all this, as it gave me an opportunity to reflect on my career to that point, and learn from others important strategies for taking control.

Email

Conclusion

This chapter has drawn together three strands, the literature, survey data and women’s voices to explore general and academic women’s careers. The chapter has defined careers broadly and looked at many of the factors that assist women in enriching their working lives. LDW influences these processes at every step on the way. It provides support, encouragement, goal setting, and confidence, alongside a sense of belonging, building networks and increasing visibility. Finally, it encourages women to make the career steps they wish, which sometimes entails moving on. Clearly the programme supports and enhances women’s success, while also fostering cultural change around inclusivity and in broadened understandings of success and leadership.

PERSONAL STORY

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

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PersoNAL STORY

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

successful NH&MRC grant in five years) which allowed her to release from administrative commitments in 2004. She is currently focusing on running these studies with the help of her research team, along with her responsibilities as a practising clinical immunologist and allergist at PMH.

“I really felt that I was appreciated as Head of School and it’s something I will probably go back to later in my career.”

Footnotes

1 General staff is used, for lack of a better term, as an all encompassing term for technical, professional, administrative, management and research staff employed under the General Staff Agreement.

2 Data reported here does not include respondents who have since left UWA.