

## *Ceiling starts in schools*

The results of the Australian women in leadership census are very disheartening, an increase of only 1.4 per cent for women in senior executive roles and hardly any increase in the number of women who hold board directorships ("Affirmative: the glass ceiling is still firmly in place", *Herald*, October 6). The results demonstrate that the job of equality for women in the Australian workforce is only half done.

I see so many talented young women working hard in their secondary school and university years to gain outstanding results.

While I recognise we have gained equality in the number of female postgraduates, particularly in courses such as law (57 per cent female) and medicine (also 57 per cent), when you look at what happens when they enter the workforce, the statistics are tragic. In 2004 only 7 per cent of law partners are females and only 30 per cent of doctors are female. Educating women for the realities of the workforce needs to be undertaken in secondary schools. Values and attitudes that perpetuate gender inequalities are instilled in childhood; adolescence may be one of the last opportunities to offer alternatives. Schools must do more mentoring for girls with business leaders.

The "old boys" club, so alive and well in Australian business, is a network that is usually formed in secondary school.

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