

## Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick wins 2014 Women of Influence award

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Elizabeth Broderick was by all accounts more than a little reluctant to put her name forward as a woman of influence, believing there were far more deserving candidates for the title.

As it turns out, she was wrong on that front: all nine judges for the *Australian Financial Review* and Westpac 100 Women of Influence awards voted Ms Broderick not only winner of the Diversity category, but also 2014's overall winner.

"She is outstanding. She is simply the best influencer I have ever seen," judge Carolyn Hewson said of the former Blake Dawson Waldron partner who left the law in 2007 to take the mantle as Australia's eighth Sex Discrimination Commissioner.

Described variously as strategic and humble, Ms Broderick is renowned for her capacity as an extraordinary communicator able to engage on a personal and professional level with everyone from domestic abuse victims in remote regions to members of the Defence Force, and the men running some of Australia's biggest companies.

Growing up in Sydney's Sutherland Shire, leadership started early for Ms Broderick, who was head girl of Meriden Anglican School. Coming from an all-girl family – save for her father, who even in the 1960s shared the household chores – Ms Broderick has said she never contemplated that women weren't, or shouldn't, be equal to men.

Developing the flexible work program at the law firm, she went on to launch a Plan of Action Towards Gender Equality, after a "listening tour" around Australia in 2008 brought her face to face with issues of domestic violence, harassment, gender-related poverty, and systemic bias in the workplace.

Her Male Champions of Change program, which puts powerful men at the forefront of updating attitudes about the capability and place of women at the very top levels of business, is being replicated in other states, and in various industries at the behest of people such as former winner, and friend, Carol Schwartz.

The Women of Influence judges were struck by how Ms Broderick had taken the role of Sex Discrimination Commissioner and transformed it. "I think Liz just shifted the agenda," judge Robert Wood said.

"She created a whole new agenda around the way we think about women in leadership. Previously I think it had been seen as a bit of a women's issue," he said about her work making men central to change. "Rather than just arguing from one side and being an antagonist, she brought both sides of the debate together and got them working in the same direction. I think it's been incredible."

Her work in "the hard area of defence", leading a major, sometimes contentious review into the treatment of women in the Defence Force, tabling four reports in federal Parliament on the issue, also drew the judges' attention.

"Liz has laid out a cultural change program to make them not just a more diverse but a better Defence Force," they said.

Most of all, it has been the power and sustainability of Ms Broderick's work across gender equality in the workplace and on issues broaching the full socio-economic spectrum, from pregnancy and parental leave to the business case for tackling domestic violence – often while facing extraordinary levels of pushback and scrutiny – that led to her choice as this year's winner.

"There's a phrase some people use," the judges said, "that people have been Brodericked."

This story was found at: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/sex-discrimination-commissioner-elizabeth-broderick-wins-2014-women->

