



Nicole's drive takes her to the top

NICOLE Underwood is successful beyond her years, heading up a leading Adelaide recruitment firm and managing a team of consultants while not yet 30.

As general manager of Entree Recruitment, a division of human resource group Hender Consulting, she has climbed the corporate ladder with ease, driven by a "passion and persistence" to succeed.

As such, she is among few South Australian women who are in executive management positions, according to a report by the Premier's Council for Women.

"I absolutely love my job," she said yesterday in her Flinders St, city, offices.

"I lead a team of 11 people all of whom are equally committed and as driven to succeed as me."

Statistics compiled for the Premier's Council for Women show that, in 2002, more than half (56.2 per cent) of Australian companies had no women executive managers.

Just under a third (29.6 per cent) had one executive manager and 17.8 per cent had two or more.

Research also revealed that women held only 8.3 per cent of board directorships in leading companies listed on the Australian Stock Exchange.

Ms Underwood said she was surprised by the findings because she had rarely given thought to the gender balance of business.

"At the end of the day, I really don't think it's a gender issue," she said.

"The people who make it to the top are those who are driven, passionate and persistent and don't stop until they achieve their goals."

Nicole Underwood at her office . . . "I absolutely love my job"

Picture: Jo-Anna Robinson

term. We are concerned with the fundamentals, with the building blocks that are needed for healthy and fulfilled lives."

The analysis also revealed that more women were living alone or in de facto relationships while the majority (85 per cent) of lone parent households were headed by women.

In 2001, in 84 per cent of lone parent households with dependent children with an income of less than \$300 a week, the lone parent was a woman.

The 14-member council, formed late last year, is developing a positive and active policy agenda for women and is helping the Government focus on services and programs to benefit women.

It is consulted on the Government's legislative and economic programs to ensure the affects on women are considered when they are implemented.

Among the report's other key findings are:

□ **THE** number of women smokers is increasing, as is the rate of female lung cancer deaths.

□ **MORE** women than men do unpaid housework and women continue to spend substantially more time (92 minutes more each day) on unpaid housework than men.

□ **GIRLS** have significantly higher school retention rates than boys (in 2001, the apparent school retention rate for full-time female students was 72.5 per cent compared with 60.4 per cent for males).

Dr Day said a series of community forums involving women from all walks of life would be held throughout South Australia during the next 12 months to highlight issues that faced women and set about addressing them.

"By raising awareness among women about how things are and how they could be, we empower women themselves," she said. "We want women of all ages and

backgrounds to be involved. The council is passionate about inclusion, not elitism."

The first forum will be held at The Observatory, Hackney, on August 13 and one of the key guests will be leading SA academic Barbara Pocock, who will speak about the work/life collision. The next forum will be in October.

"We want to build our young women into the future of this state and we want to benefit from the richness of older women's experience," Dr Day said.

"The bottom line is that the forums will be an opportunity for women to share their experiences and their visions and the council will take those voices to the Government.

"Society as a whole will be the winner."

□ **Motherhood's battleground**, Sunday Extra Page 38

Who's who on the council

THE Premier's Council for Women has 14 high-profile members, including a champion netballer, a farmer, a restaurateur and a communications expert.

Formed late last year, the council is chaired by **Dr Ingrid Day**, senior lecturer in communications and media at the University of South Australia.

Deputy chairwoman is **Suzi Roux**, tutor, teacher, former gallery director and arts consultant. The other members are:

Dr Pamela Ryan researcher; **Judith Cross** (CEO Relationships Australia);

Patricia Waria-Read (chairwoman of Aboriginal Women's Statewide Advisory Council);

Lisa Huong-Nguyen (a food industry supply chain manager);

Janet Giles (first woman secretary of United Trades and Labor Council);

Belinda Bocson (SA Museum media adviser and former SA champion swimmer);

Dr Daniella Costa (medical practitioner with Migrant Health Service);

Danielle Grant (former champion netballer and small business owner);

Deborah Thiele (farmer); **Barbara Garrett** (president, SA Council of Social Service).

Maggie Beer (restaurateur, food writer and producer); and

Sue Lamshed (state manager, corporate affairs SA for Telstra).

The aim of the council, which costs \$140,000 a year for salaries and other fees, is developing a positive and active policy agenda for women and is helping the Government focus on services and programs to benefit women.

At the time of the announcement, Premier Mike Rann said members of the council had been selected because of their intimate knowledge of issues related to Aboriginal women, cultural diversity, domestic violence, disability, ageing, education, business, regional affairs and health.

"This is not an elitist body but one grounded in common sense that will ensure a wide range of women's issues receive the attention they deserve," he said.

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