

Driving Industry Conversations – Employing Women in the Automotive Industry

This document summarises discussions from Driving Industry Conversations – Employing Women in the Automotive Industry - consultation on 15 July 2026. This summary captures the consistent themes raised across these sessions to inform training package reform and broader industry engagement.

Women bring significant value to automotive workplaces

Participants consistently identified a range of benefits from employing women, including:

- Greater workforce diversity and broader perspectives
- Improved workplace culture, professionalism and respect
- Strong attention to quality, safety and care of tools and equipment
- Increased innovation, particularly around safer work practices and manual handling
- Better communication and collaboration within teams
- Positive customer perceptions and improved customer experience
- Strong leadership potential and succession planning opportunities

Many participants also noted that female employees often become visible role models, encouraging other women and girls to consider careers in automotive.

Representation matters

A recurring theme was that visible female technicians, trainers and leaders encourage more women to enter the industry. Examples included:

- Female trainers increasing confidence among apprentices
- Women featured in recruitment and promotional campaigns generating greater interest from female applicants
- Female mentors and buddy programs supporting new entrants
- Industry groups promoting employment opportunities specifically to women

Participants agreed that prospective apprentices are more likely to pursue automotive careers when they can see women already succeeding in those roles.

Recruitment remains a major challenge

Despite widespread support for employing women, many organisations reported receiving very few female applications. Key observations included:

- The available talent pool remains small
- Skill shortages continue across the industry regardless of gender
- More awareness is needed of the wide variety of automotive career pathways
- Industry promotion should focus on attracting women before career decisions are made

Several participants highlighted the importance of exposing young women to automotive careers through schools, pre-apprenticeship programs and industry experiences.

Workplace adaptations are generally small but important

Most organisations reported that relatively few changes were required to accommodate women. However, several practical improvements were identified:

- Appropriate female uniforms
- PPE designed to properly fit women
- Suitable bathroom and hygiene facilities
- Inclusive workplace amenities
- Gender-neutral facilities where appropriate
- Better access to female mentors and support networks

Participants agreed these changes are relatively simple but send a strong message that women belong in the workplace.

Workplace culture is critical

Culture was identified as one of the biggest factors influencing attraction and retention.

Successful workplaces demonstrated:

- Respectful behaviour and communication
- Clear expectations around appropriate conduct
- Prompt intervention when inappropriate behaviour occurs
- Coaching and education rather than punitive responses where appropriate
- Inclusive leadership
- Equal access to parental leave discussions and flexible work arrangements

Some organisations reported that industry attitudes are improving, while others acknowledged that resistance still exists within parts of the sector.

Technology is reducing physical barriers

Participants noted that advances in technology have significantly changed the nature of automotive work. Examples included:

- Improved workshop equipment
- Ergonomic tools
- Mechanical lifting devices
- Safer work methods
- Increased focus on manual handling and injury prevention

These developments are making many technical roles more accessible for all workers.

Career pathways extend beyond the workshop

Several participants shared their own career journeys, demonstrating that automotive careers are often non-linear. Examples included progression into:

- Training and education
- Leadership
- Product development
- Human resources
- Operations
- Industry engagement

- Technical support
- Learning and development

Participants suggested promoting these long-term career opportunities as a way to attract and retain more women.

Challenges Identified

Participants identified several ongoing challenges:

- Low awareness of automotive careers among women
- Persistent stereotypes about technical trades
- Limited female applicants
- Some workplaces requiring continued cultural change
- Inconsistent access to suitable uniforms, PPE and facilities
- Public perceptions that automotive remains a male-only industry

Opportunities for Industry, suggested priorities included:

- Promote successful women already working in automotive
- Increase school and community engagement
- Expand mentoring and networking opportunities
- Improve recruitment campaigns featuring women
- Ensure workplaces provide appropriate facilities, uniforms and PPE
- Continue building respectful and inclusive workplace cultures
- Showcase the breadth of career pathways available within automotive

Overall Consultation Insights

The consultation demonstrated strong industry support for increasing female participation across the automotive workforce. While workforce shortages remain a significant driver, participants consistently emphasised that employing women delivers broader benefits including stronger workplace culture, improved innovation, enhanced safety, better customer outcomes and more diverse leadership.

The discussion also reinforced that many barriers can be addressed through practical workplace improvements, visible role models, inclusive recruitment practices and ongoing cultural change. Continued collaboration between employers, training providers and industry organisations will be important to increase awareness of automotive careers and create environments where women can enter, thrive and progress throughout the industry.

The views, claims, and recommendations in this summary are drawn solely from what was discussed during the Driving Industry Conversations consultation and do not necessarily reflect the official position of AUSMASA. They are presented to capture industry feedback and inform further discussion, not as AUSMASA policy or endorsement.