

Driving Industry Conversations – Women in Automotive webinar

This document summarises discussions from Driving Industry Conversations – Women in Automotive webinar on 24 July 2026. This summary captures the consistent themes raised across these sessions to inform training package reform and broader industry engagement.

Why Driving Industry Conversations?

The Driving Industry Conversations initiative provides an opportunity for industry to contribute to workforce and training discussions without the significant time commitment required for formal committees or working groups.

Industry feedback is being used to:

- Inform future automotive training and qualifications.
- Identify workforce challenges and opportunities.
- Support evidence-based workforce planning.
- Address national automotive skills shortages.

Current Industry Snapshot

Participants were presented with national workforce data showing:

- Women remain significantly underrepresented across automotive occupations.
- Female apprenticeship commencements continue to fluctuate.
- Women are achieving higher levels of education overall, presenting an opportunity for greater participation in automotive careers.
- Automotive offers strong opportunities for mature-age career changers and people transitioning from other industries.

Consultation Findings

Barriers preventing women entering automotive

Across both consultations, participants consistently identified several barriers.

- Limited awareness and exposure
- Low visibility of automotive careers in schools
- Limited promotion by career advisers
- Reduced opportunities for work experience
- Less exposure to vehicle maintenance within families than previous generations.

Industry perception

Participants identified ongoing stereotypes including:

- Automotive being viewed as a “male industry”
- Perceptions that technical work is physically unsuitable for women
- Concerns about workplace culture
- Fear of discrimination and exclusion

Confidence and Self-Doubt

Many women reported:

- Having little or no previous experience using tools
- Feeling expected to “already know” practical skills
- Hesitating to ask questions
- Lacking confidence despite having strong capability

Recruitment Practices

Participants noted that:

- Masculine language in advertisements discourages applicants
- Long lists of selection criteria reduce female applications
- Job advertisements often fail to highlight support, mentoring or career development

What Attracts Women to Automotive?

Consultation participants identified several positive drivers:

- Passion for vehicles and problem solving
- Hands-on, practical work
- Career change opportunities
- Apprenticeship pathways
- Strong mentors and supportive workplaces
- Continuous learning opportunities
- Visible female role models

The recurring message was:

“You can’t be what you can’t see.”

Increasing the visibility of women already working successfully within automotive was identified as a significant opportunity.

Recruiting Women

The webinar highlighted practical improvements businesses can make for inclusive recruitment

Businesses were encouraged to:

- Use gender-neutral language
- Replace terms such as “tradesmen” with “tradespeople” or “team.”
- Focus on company culture and learning opportunities
- Highlight mentoring and career pathways
- Clearly explain workplace benefits

Flexible Thinking

Rather than focusing solely on technical capability, employers were encouraged to value:

- Attitude
- Willingness to learn
- Growth potential
- Cultural fit

Retaining Women

Retention emerged as one of the strongest themes across the consultations.

Participants reported that recruitment alone is not enough if workplaces fail to support women throughout their careers.

Common Retention Challenges

Women described experiences including:

- Workplace isolation
- Lack of female amenities
- Poorly fitting PPE and uniforms
- Gender stereotypes
- Having to continually prove competence
- Inappropriate comments and workplace behaviours
- Limited flexibility during different life stages
- Lack of mentoring

Examples shared included:

- Apprentices receiving hand-me-down uniforms
- Inadequate access to female facilities
- Workplace cultures that tolerate inappropriate behaviour

Strategies to Improve Retention

Participants identified practical improvements including:

- Structured onboarding
- Strong mentoring
- Ongoing professional development
- Clear career progression
- Flexible work arrangements where possible
- Respectful workplace cultures
- Psychological safety
- Appropriate facilities and PPE
- Support during parental leave and return-to-work transitions

Career Pathways

A key message throughout the webinar was that automotive careers are not linear.

Possible career pathways discussed included:

Technical

- Apprentice
- Diagnostic Technician
- Master Technician
- Specialist technical roles

Leadership

- Workshop Supervisor

- Service Manager
- Fixed Operations Manager
- Dealer Principal

Training

- TAFE Teacher
- Trainer
- Learning & Development
- Curriculum Development

Industry Engagement

- Workforce Development
- Industry Partnerships
- Training Organisations
- Jobs and Skills Councils

Product & Engineering

- Product Development
- Research & Development
- Technical Support
- OEM Specialist Roles

Participants were encouraged to discuss career aspirations regularly with employees rather than assuming a single progression pathway.

Benefits of Employing Women

Employers participating in the consultation identified numerous benefits, including:

- Greater workforce diversity
- Broader perspectives and problem solving
- Improved workplace culture
- Strong attention to quality
- Better communication and collaboration
- Positive customer experiences
- Improved safety practices
- Strong leadership potential

Industry Initiatives Highlighted

Participants shared examples of programmes supporting women in automotive, including:

- Busy Sisters
- Trade Women Australia
- Women in Automotive events
- Auto Women initiatives
- Women Try-a-Trade events
- TAFE outreach programmes

- Group Training Organisations supporting female apprentices

These initiatives were recognised as valuable in increasing awareness, mentoring and workforce participation.

Key Takeaways

The webinar reinforced that increasing women's participation requires action across the entire employment journey not just recruitment.

Key priorities identified were:

- Increase awareness of automotive careers
- Promote women already working in the industry
- Use inclusive recruitment practices
- Improve workplace culture and psychological safety
- Provide mentoring and ongoing career development
- Offer greater flexibility throughout different life stages
- Create visible career pathways
- Strengthen collaboration between employers, training providers and industry organisations.

The views, claims, and recommendations in this summary are drawn from what was discussed during the Driving Industry Conversations consultations 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.