

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**Mentoring programme promotes women into leadership**

“The new mentoring programme launched tonight by the Institute of Directors will support women into governance roles,” says Ministry of Women’s Affairs Chief Executive, Rowena Phair.

“The Mentoring for Diversity programme will help women develop connections and gain the skills that will allow them to achieve board positions. We have large numbers of highly skilled women and this will help them into governance roles.”

“New Zealand is trailing many other countries on women’s representation in private sector governance, for example, women currently hold only 9.32 percent of directorships in New Zealand’s listed companies. Australia overtook us last year as a result of initiatives they had in place such as mentoring programmes.”

“The Ministry strongly applauds the Institute of Directors for developing the Mentoring for Diversity programme to progress women into leadership. This initiative will not only provide guidance and a network for up-and-coming directors, it will also provide benefits for the organisations.”

“There is now strong evidence showing a positive relationship between women on boards and better organisational performance, particularly bottom-line financial performance,” she said.

“The evidence following the global financial crisis is that companies with diverse leadership are more able to avoid group-think and have better risk management. They are also able to respond more quickly to the changing external environment.”

The Ministry also applauds those chairs and directors who have stepped forward to act as mentors and to the women who have put themselves forward. Both are making a personal commitment to bring about change.

The Institute of Directors launched its inaugural Mentoring for Diversity programme for 2012 in Wellington on 7 December. It aims to increase the number of women on NZX-listed and large company boards.

Thirty chairs and senior directors of major companies will each act as a mentor to one of 30 well-qualified women. The 30 women were chosen from over 130 applicants by a selection panel made up of Institute of Directors President Denham Shale, Ministry of Women’s Affairs Chief Executive Rowena Phair and Institute of Directors Chief Executive Ralph Chivers. ENDS

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