



Innovation. Partnerships. Diversity.

WOMEN IN AVIATION INDUSTRY INITIATIVE:

SUMMARY REPORT

JUNE 2026

OVERALL PROJECT SUMMARY

Aviation/Aerospace Australia successfully delivered three major initiatives under the Women in Aviation Industry Initiative (WAI) between June 2024 and June 2026:

- Aviators in Schools Program
- Women in Aviation Culture Survey
- Barriers to the Workplace Survey

The project successfully met its contractual obligations, completed all milestones, exceeded participation targets in the education engagement component, and delivered valuable research to inform future gender equity initiatives in Australian aviation. Collectively, the three projects have increased industry engagement, expanded opportunities for students, and strengthened the evidence base needed to improve outcomes for women across the aviation workforce

Strategic Contribution to the Women in Aviation Industry Initiative

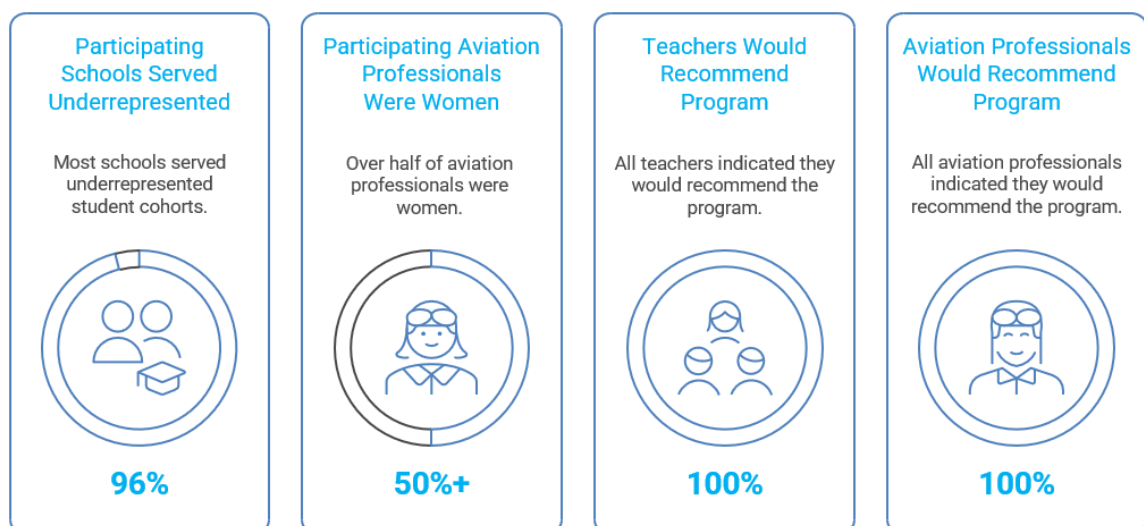
The project contributed to several key objectives of the WAI Strategic Action Plan by:

- Increasing visibility of aviation career pathways for girls and young women.
- Expanding access to female role models and industry mentors.
- Strengthening industry-school partnerships.
- Generating new evidence on workplace culture and barriers to participation.
- Supporting informed policy development to improve attraction, retention and advancement of women in aviation.
- Creating resources and relationships that can continue to deliver benefits beyond the funding period.

KEY STATISTICS FROM THE REPORT

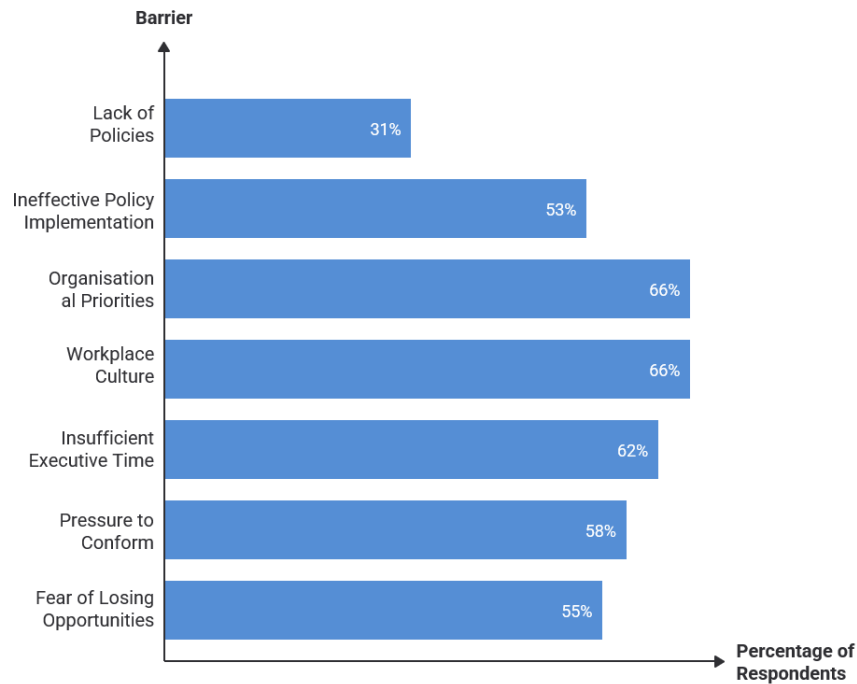
1. Aviator in Schools

- The Aviators in Schools Initiative exceeded its targets, delivering 60 partnerships across 55 schools and reaching more than 1,269 students.
- Importantly, 96% of participating schools served underrepresented student cohorts, and over half of participating aviation professionals were women.
- Participant satisfaction was exceptionally strong, with 100% of teachers and aviation professionals indicating they would recommend the program.



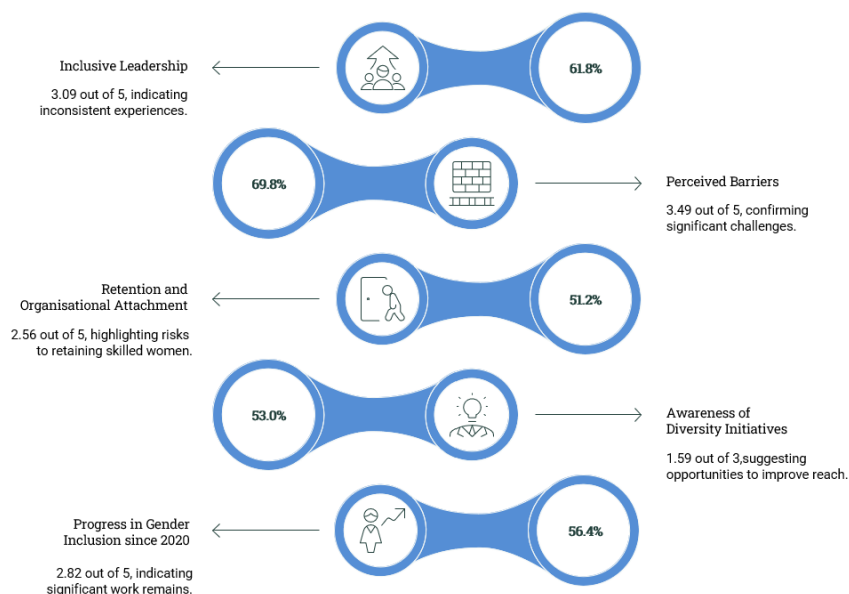
2. Workplace Culture

- Only 31% of respondents identified a lack of policies as a challenge, while 53% identified ineffective implementation of existing policies and procedures.
- Two-thirds of respondents (66%) identified organisational priorities and workplace culture as the primary barriers to improving outcomes for women.
- 66% identified workplace traditions and conventions as a barrier, indicating that cultural factors remain a significant challenge despite formal policies being in place.
- 62% identified insufficient executive time and commitment as a barrier to implementation.
- 58% identified pressure to conform to male-dominated workplace norms as a continuing challenge.
- 55% identified fear of losing opportunities as a barrier to participation and progression.



3. Barriers to Workplace

- Women reported only moderate levels of inclusive leadership (3.09/5), indicating that experiences of workplace inclusion remain inconsistent across the sector.
- Perceived barriers scored highest of all measured factors (3.49/5), confirming that significant challenges to women's participation and progression remain.
- Retention and organisational attachment scored relatively low (2.56/5), highlighting ongoing risks to retaining skilled women in the aviation workforce.
- Awareness of diversity and visibility initiatives was only low-to-moderate (1.59/3), suggesting opportunities to improve the reach and impact of existing programs.
- Respondents reported only moderate progress in gender inclusion since 2020 (2.82/5), indicating that while improvements have occurred, significant work remains.



Quotes:

“While women remain committed to aviation careers, significant barriers persist and retention remains a challenge. The research found that inclusive leadership is strongly associated with women remaining and progressing in the sector, highlighting workplace culture as a critical workforce capability issue”

“The challenge facing the aviation, aerospace and space sectors is not the absence of policy, but translating policy into visible, trusted and consistently enforced workplace practice.”

“The Aviators in Schools Initiative exceeded its targets and demonstrated how industry-education partnerships can inspire the next generation of aviation professionals while expanding opportunities for students from underrepresented communities.”

WORKPLACE CULTURE SURVEY - SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. **Key message**

The aviation, aerospace and space sectors have established the policy foundations for respectful workplaces, but meaningful progress now depends on stronger implementation, leadership accountability, safer reporting environments and improved career pathways for women.

2. **Overview**

The survey examined how organisations across Australia's aviation, aerospace and space sectors can improve workplace culture and respect for women. The study analysed 174 valid responses from employees across aviation, aerospace, space, defence, education, consultancy and regulatory sectors. Women represented 72% of respondents.

3. **Key Findings**

The research found that most organisations have formal policies, procedures and reporting mechanisms in place to address discrimination, harassment and inappropriate behaviour. However, respondents reported that these measures are not always consistently implemented, trusted or enforced in day-to-day workplace practice.

4. **Major Challenges Identified**

a. Implementation Gap

The strongest finding was the gap between policy and practice. While policies generally exist, respondents expressed lower confidence in:

- Consistent enforcement of policies.
- Complaint handling processes.
- Leadership accountability.
- Visible organisational commitment to respectful workplace culture.

b. Male-Dominated Workplace Norms

Respondents identified long-standing workplace traditions and male-dominated cultures as significant barriers to progress. Many reported pressure to conform to existing workplace norms and described the continued presence of informal "boys' club" networks that can disadvantage women.

c. *Leadership and Career Progression*

The survey highlighted concerns regarding:

- Limited representation of women in senior leadership positions.
- Uneven access to sponsorship and mentoring opportunities.
- Perceptions of a "glass ceiling" at executive and senior management levels.
- Concerns about fairness and transparency in promotion pathways.

d. *Fear of Speaking Up*

Many respondents indicated concerns about:

- Negative repercussions from raising workplace issues.
- Lack of confidence in reporting systems.
- Fear of career impacts when challenging inappropriate behaviour.

e. *Work-Life and Caregiving Support*

Respondents identified the need for stronger organisational support for:

- Parenting and caregiving responsibilities.
- Pregnancy and maternity-related needs.
- Menopause and women's health issues.
- Flexible work arrangements and wellbeing initiatives.

5. **Positive Findings**

Despite the challenges identified, the report found several encouraging signs:

- Employees generally understand appropriate workplace behaviour and reporting processes.
- Awareness of respectful workplace expectations is relatively high.
- Respondents reported strong personal commitment to respectful behaviours.
- Future willingness to support cultural change was very strong.
- Many organisations have established foundational policies and frameworks that can be built upon.

6. **Policy Implications**

The report concludes that future efforts should focus less on creating additional policies and more on ensuring existing policies are effectively implemented. Key priorities include:

- Leadership accountability.
- Trusted and safe reporting mechanisms.
- Transparent career progression pathways.
- Greater visibility of women in leadership roles.
- Sector-specific guidance and education.
- Measurement of cultural outcomes rather than simple policy compliance.

BARRIERS TO WORKPLACE CULTURE SURVEY

1. Key message

The research found that inclusive leadership is the strongest factor associated with women's retention and progression in Australia's aviation and aerospace sectors, highlighting that workplace culture is as important as recruitment in addressing workforce participation. While awareness and visibility initiatives have contributed to progress, persistent barriers, including male-dominated cultures, discrimination, work-life balance pressures and limited career pathways - continue to affect women's long-term participation and advancement.

2. Key Outcomes

a. *Generated New Evidence on Women's Retention in Aviation*

The project produced one of the few Australian evidence bases examining the relationship between workplace culture, leadership and women's retention in aviation and aerospace.

b. *Identified Leadership as a Critical Retention Lever*

The strongest finding was that women who experienced more inclusive leadership reported:

- Greater organisational attachment.
- Stronger intention to remain in the sector.
- More positive perceptions of gender inclusion progress.

c. *Confirmed Persistent Structural Barriers Remain*

The research identified continuing barriers affecting women's participation and progression, including:

- Male-dominated workplace cultures.
- Harassment and discrimination.
- Historical hiring patterns.
- Work-life balance pressures.
- Training costs and time commitments.
- Limited visibility of career pathways and inclusion initiatives.

Importantly, respondents who perceived stronger barriers were less likely to report positive cultural progress and less likely to indicate an intention to remain in the industry.

d. *Demonstrated that Visibility Initiatives Alone Are Insufficient*

The report found that awareness of diversity and visibility initiatives was generally low to moderate across respondents. While visibility was positively associated with perceptions of progress, the evidence suggests visibility activities are most effective when linked to:

- Mentoring and sponsorship.
- Career development pathways.
- Leadership accountability.
- Safe reporting mechanisms.
- Workplace inclusion systems.

e. *Established Leadership and Culture as an Enabling Priority*

A key policy outcome from the project is the identification of leadership and workplace culture as enabling conditions for women's participation, progression and retention. The report argues that awareness campaigns and outreach activities alone are unlikely to achieve sustainable workforce outcomes without supportive workplace environments.

3. Recommendations

The project generated a suite of evidence-based recommendations, including:

- Inclusive leadership capability development.
- Leadership accountability measures.
- Enhanced mentoring and sponsorship programs.
- Transparent career progression pathways.
- Improved reporting and response mechanisms.
- Flexible work and career continuity initiatives.
- Ongoing sector monitoring and evaluation.

AVIATORS IN SCHOOLS PROGRAM

1. Key message

The program increased awareness of aviation careers among school students, provided direct exposure to industry role models, and created sustainable partnerships between education and industry that can continue beyond the grant period. Female aviation professionals were strongly represented, providing visible role models for girls considering aviation careers.

2. Key outcomes

The Aviators in Schools Program exceeded all major participation targets and strengthened connections between schools and aviation professionals.

a. *Exceeded participation and reach targets.*

- 60 school–industry partnerships established (target: 50)
- 55 schools actively participating
- 59 teachers engaged
- 45 aviation professionals involved
- 53% of participating aviation professionals were women
- Approximately 1,374 students reached (target: 1,000)
- 100% of evaluation respondents indicated they would recommend the program to others.

b. *Increased Visibility of Aviation Careers*

The program provided students with direct access to aviation professionals, exposing them to real-world aviation, aerospace and STEM careers that are often difficult to access through traditional education pathways.

Teachers reported:

- Increased student awareness of aviation careers.
- Improved understanding of aviation-related STEM pathways.
- Greater awareness of local aviation industries and employment opportunities.
- Stronger connections between classroom learning and future careers.

c. *Strengthened the Future Aviation Workforce Pipeline*

The initiative contributed to long-term workforce development by:

- Introducing students to aviation careers at school age.
- Building awareness of study pathways into aviation and aerospace.

- Providing authentic industry role models.
- Increasing student interest and engagement in STEM subjects.

The evaluation found evidence that students were making stronger connections between STEM learning and future career opportunities, helping build future workforce capability.

d. *Improved Gender Representation and Role Model Visibility*

Female aviation professionals participated in more than half of all partnerships. The evaluation found that female role models were particularly valuable in:

- Supporting girls' engagement in STEM.
- Increasing confidence and aspiration.
- Demonstrating achievable career pathways in traditionally male-dominated sectors.

e. *Increased Teacher Capability and STEM Delivery*

Teachers reported:

- Increased knowledge of aviation-related STEM.
- Greater confidence discussing aviation careers.
- Improved understanding of real-world STEM applications.
- Increased motivation to teach STEM subjects.
- Valuable professional development through industry engagement.

The program effectively functioned as a form of industry-linked professional learning for educators.

f. *Successfully Reached Underrepresented Communities*

A significant outcome was the program's reach into schools serving underrepresented populations:

- 96% of participating schools had underrepresented student cohorts.
- 26% were regional or remote schools.
- Schools with Indigenous student populations and lower socio-economic backgrounds were successfully engaged.

This demonstrates that the program contributed to broadening participation in aviation and STEM pathways beyond metropolitan and traditional cohorts.

g. *Created Sustainable School–Industry Partnerships*

The evaluation found strong evidence that the partnership model was:

- Flexible and scalable.
- Highly valued by both teachers and industry participants.
- Likely to continue beyond the funded period.
- Capable of supporting repeat engagement and ongoing relationships.

Many schools requested repeat visits and ongoing relationships with aviation professionals.

3. Detailed evaluation

CSIRO Education and Outreach Impact and Evaluation team undertook evaluation activities as per A/AA and CSIRO Human Research Ethics Committee approved evaluation plan.

- 11 interviews were conducted (8 Aviation professionals; 3 teachers)
- 14 survey responses were received (8 Aviation professionals; 6 teachers)
- Program operation data and program participation data was analysed.

A reflective practice workshop was facilitated with CSIRO staff in November 2025 along with a number of informal sense checking meetings up until the evaluation report was finalised.

4. Extensive marketing and communications

During this reporting period the following promotional activities were delivered to recruit Aviation Professionals to the Initiative:

- Women in Aviation/Aerospace Brisbane Summit
- Women in Aviation/Aerospace Adelaide Summit
- Women in Aviation/Aerospace Melbourne Summit – including a panel presentation featuring an AISI partnership

Schools and educators continue to be recruited to the program through efforts to promote the program in both mainstream and social media publications.