Let me being by saying that I simply do not care what proportion of STEMM experts are female or any other identity group. If 100% of them were females from Iceland I do not care in principle. An extreme skew is possibly an indicator of a systemic problem but it is not a problem in itself.

Applications: Females dominate lower levels EL1 and EL2 while make dominate higher levels. The 4 to 1 ratio in L3 is reflective of the senior academic workforce, as pointed out in the paper.

	F	М	Weight
EL1	56.2%	43.8%	34.3%
EL2	53.7%	46.3%	24.8%
L1	42.3%	57.7%	23.6%
L2	34.7%	65.3%	11.0%
L3	20.2%	79.8%	6.3%
ALL	47.6%	52.4%	100%

The paper repeatedly refers to the reduced female applications at higher levels as "attrition". Since this is cross-sectional data it says nothing at all about attribution. The authors are presumably not innumerate and would realise this. There no doubt is attrition over time but they do not present any data or talk about how to address it. I surmise this is because they are keen to get onto their prespecified solution of quotas.

Success rates.

Overall, males have a higher success rate (15.1%) than females (12.3%). This is mainly because they are more senior and senior applicants have higher success rates. The key figures are in Table 2, that gives success rates by seniority (EL1 is lowest) and gender which I have reproduced below.

	F	Μ	ALL	M-F
EL1	13.4%	15.4%	14.2%	2.0%
EL2	9.3%	11.3%	10.2%	2.0%
L1	8.8%	8.1%	8.4%	-0.7%
L2	18.1%	15.4%	16.3%	-2.8%
L3	38.2%	41.8%	41.1%	3.6%
All	12.3%	15.1%	13.8%	2.8%

The largest difference is for the highest L3 level where the success rate is 38% for females and 42% for males. This might sound significant but if you look at the data it represents just 2 fewer female grants than expected (26 instead of 28). The number involved to achieve equal success rates are tiny and none of this data is benchmarked against the measure quality of the projects. Is there any reason why they could not have fitted a model where chance of success depends on quality and level and then displayed standardised deviations from this ideal?

Definition of gender. No, I am not getting into the issue you think I am. The point is that they identify the project by the gender of the CI. In the senior levels, is it not possible that a senior male applicant will attract a large grant that employs half a dozen female post-docs? Surely, it would be worth looking at the gender of those who end up with the money as well as the grant holders.

Their solutions.

It is worth noting the NHMRC already employ affirmative actions, which they call Structural priority Funding. This appears to be a bucket of money which is allocated to females (and perhaps other groups) until it is exhausted.

They consider four artificial methods, two around increased SPF and two direct quotas on grants and money. They then see how these schemes would have played out over previous years. They call this a "model". I call it an accounting exercise. More egregiously, there is no Option 0: accept the current situation.

Just for fun, I did a little what-if calculation myself. What if the NHMRC forced a 50% gender quota within each level but maintained the same funding levels across the 5 seniority levels. The implied success rates are below. Interesting eh? Because of the smaller number of EL male candidates, they will have to have a higher success rate than females to achieve parity. Though I do not think the NHMRC are considering this. And for L3, the success rate will have to be 103.5% for females to achieve parity with males! This is because the number of female applicants in this group is so low (around 20%).

	F	Μ
EL1	12.7%	16.3%
EL2	9.6%	11.0%
L1	9.9%	7.3%
L2	23.5%	12.5%
L3	101.5%	25.7%

There was basically no real consultation after this "Discussion paper" and <u>they have already chosen</u> <u>option</u> 3, which is to give 50% of grants to women and men for mid-and senior researchers. And you may have noted that females are already the majority of EL1 and EL2.

There appears to be no authors taking credit for this steaming turd of a report. I don't blame them.