

# Diversity



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Chania Rodwell, Member of M.H. Carnegie & Co. Investment Team

AVCAL Diversity role model series 2017

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## 1. What attracted you to private equity?

Private Equity was not previously an industry I had much exposure to, but when my boss asked me to join him when he moved to a specialised situations PE fund, I saw the opportunity to move from advising on distressed companies and being involved in their administration, to using my skills for turnaround and growth.

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## 2. What is unique about private equity as a career path?

You get to meet some amazing and incredibly smart people; passionate founders and management teams, other

professionals across the PE industry, as well as subject matter experts and highly experienced advisors across different parts of the market.

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## 3. How do you find your work/life balance?

As with most professions today, I find that it's a constant balancing act to ensure I spend enough time for both my work and family. I'd love to spend more time on both.

Having too many things going on in my life that I enjoy is a nice problem to have. But I also work really hard to ensure I do not neglect the things that matter most. I am lucky to have worked for a PE firm that has a very pragmatic approach to working flexibly — different PE firms have different policies and cultures around that.

It is an industry which is well suited to working in a flexible manner because as a major shareholder in the businesses that you invest into you can, to a large extent, set the timeframes and schedules around meetings and major projects. When you are an adviser, you don't get the opportunity to do that as much.



## Who we are

AVCAL is a national association which represents the private equity and venture capital industries covering early stage, expansion and management buyouts. Our members include fund managers, investors and advisors who support the industry.

## AVCAL members build better businesses

The investment model used by the private equity and venture capital industries supports the building of stronger businesses that can deliver sustainable increases in enterprise value over the long-term.

## AVCAL's core objective

To ensure that the business community and other key stakeholders understand the benefits of the private capital model of business ownership, and the role that it can play in contributing to investment and employment growth across the Australian economy.

I'm a firm believer in the fact that flexibility in the workplace needs to go both ways – there are times when the job has to come first, and there are other times when your family has to come first. I think that's the secret to making workplace flexibility work for both employee and employer.

### 4. Why do you think there aren't currently many women in the industry?

One of the challenges across the PE industry as a whole is that there haven't been enough female candidates come through as part of the recruitment process.

In Australia, new recruits into the PE industry are largely drawn from a small number of feeder professions such as investment banking, management consulting, and accounting/advisory firms. Because new hires tend to be channelled through a handful of key recruitment firms that most PE industry participants go-to, we have been working closely with those recruiters over the past couple of years to proactively boost the number of female candidates that are put forward for consideration during the formal processes.

We are all focussed on trying to identify a more diverse range of candidates outside of the traditional – and often male-dominated – feeder professions into the future. For some PE firms, that will mean they need to adopt a more expansive approach beyond traditional recruitment processes. The future of our industry will rely to a great extent on our capacity to draw-in diverse skills and experience from professions and industries outside of those which some of us came from, which is great news for anyone interested in a career in PE in years to come.

### 5. If you were thinking of starting in the industry now, what would you need to know or do?

Do as much research as possible to find out about the policies and cultures of the different PE firms before applying for a role – there can be a degree of variance so it's important to align yourself with those that represent the best 'fit' for your own values and objectives. PE firms tend to be comprised of relatively small teams, and just like any small business it's vital that you are able to get along well with all members of the team you will be working closely with.

Working in one of the feeder professions mentioned earlier can be an advantage, however if you have genuine value-add expertise and you are currently based in other sectors of the economy, or

even in academia, you could certainly forge a successful career in PE – I know of many people in our industry who have come from diverse backgrounds in terms of previous professional experience. It helps if you are comfortable taking on challenges and are confident in putting forward your views and presenting solutions to potentially intimidating audiences.

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Have a story to tell? Express your interest via [communications@avcal.com.au](mailto:communications@avcal.com.au).