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Why not address conscious bias?

In "Push to propel women into senior ranks" (AFR, March 23), company chairman Bob Every was quoted as saying the fundamental reason women don't get top jobs was because of unconscious bias favouring men.

In its 2012 annual report, Rio Tinto states it is adopting unconscious bias training to influence the mindsets that hinder the progress of women and minority groups in Rio.

Other large companies are also undertaking unconscious bias training. As consultants supporting gender diversity, we applaud these initiatives but wonder why no one seems to be addressing conscious bias in their organisations.

Unconscious bias alone does not explain the dreadful statistics released last month by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency, showing that in the ASX 500, less than 3 per cent of chairmen and CEOs, and only 9 per cent of directors and key executives, are female.

Mark Toner, *Gender Matters*
Brighton, Vic

Fair go for FWA

Mark Skulley ("Business, unions at odds over arbitration" AFR, March 25) reports that union-proposed changes to FWA are being labelled as an election-year wish list. The power of the union movement within the present federal government is already beyond dispute. Workplace Relations Minister Bill Shorten himself is a former AWU boss. Small businesses deserve fair treatment when it comes to arbitration of workplace disputes, and the proposed changes to FWA circumvent any input from business. Corporatising the unions would not

Protect the minority

The story "Leighton CEO puts positive spin on fracas" (AFR, March 26), reveals the need for security exchanges and/or the regulator to require corporations to protect the "Painful side of being a minority shareholder" (AFR, March 26). Early last century many Australian companies protected minority shareholders with sliding scale voting for directors that limited the total votes of any one investor to 25 per cent. A more elegant solution is a form of preferential voting described as cumulative voting that was mandated in many states of the United States and is used in the Philippines. In any event, the false and misleading idea of any director being described as "independent" to protect investors should be terminated.

Shann Turnbull,
Woollahra, NSW

Howes is misguided

According to Paul Howes, the success or failure of public policy is not measured by reference to its outcomes or efficiency gains but instead by the decline or increase in union membership ("Ferguson lost us members, say union leaders", AFR, March 25). Mr Howes' stance is yet another example of what is wrong with the current leadership of the Labor Party and the labour movement generally.

Success is not defined by reference to improvements in standards of living but by the size of one's personal influence. Mr Howes, his predecessor and the Prime Minister may have an iron grip on caucus but to what end? The Gillard government continues to alienate business, faces electoral oblivion in September and has no vision for nation building. What does