‘What do you want to be when you grow up?’ It’s probably one of the most hated questions for children the world over and is frequently asked at intervals in their early lives by doting relatives, school teachers or friends. While in general the boys, according to culture, continue to come up with ideas like rocket scientist, pilot or racing driver, some of the girls in turn might suggest a teacher, air hostess or nurse; typically the traditional ‘female’ caring professions. But how many of us at an early age would have harboured any ambition to become a company director or head up the board of management at a global multinational company?

Chances are, not many of us. The traditional ‘job for life’ security enjoyed by previous generations is now relatively outdated and rapidly becoming extinct in the corporate world today, thanks to the introduction of downsizing, mergers and
takeovers. But I think, in many cases, despite this huge change in the work culture, the career path you choose in your early years can have a real make or break effect when it comes to your future climb up the corporate career ladder.

While it’s now socially acceptable for women to make up a large proportion of the world’s workforce, when it comes to climbing the corporate ladder, how many of us have had to hang on for dear life swinging from that first rung? The world’s boardrooms are sadly lacking in women and much has been written over the years about the sexist ‘glass ceiling’ that hampers women’s success beyond a certain point in their career. While for men the glass ceiling may be just a myth, for many women it’s a source of real frustration and can potentially spell the end of their career unless they can find a way to break through.

Let’s take a look at the jobs that these women are doing. According to research from the Australian Equal Opportunities Women in the Workplace Agency, women across Australia have carved out great success for themselves in the traditional support roles, areas like human resources, the legal profession and public affairs but the Women in the Workplace Agency claims they’re not the sort of jobs that are likely to lead to chief executive roles within major Australian corporations. There are still many women the world over stuck in the low pay ghettos of cleaning, clerical or caring, with no hope of getting out because of their education, class or upbringing. Traditionally women in the workforce have often been the second-class citizens; think of the inhuman conditions that have been highlighted in sweat-