

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2016 ADDRESS
BY HER EXCELLENCY
PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AM
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
St MATTHEW'S CHURCH HALL NEW NORFOLK
TUESDAY 8TH MARCH**

Thank you for inviting me to New Norfolk to celebrate International Women's Day.

I acknowledge and pay respect to the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community as the traditional and original owners, and continuing custodians of this land on which we gather today, and acknowledge Elders – past and present.

This year's IWD theme is Pledge for Parity, pledging to take concrete steps to achieve gender parity more quickly. In the light of this I thought I would talk about my career and tie this in with any lessons it might have in helping women and girls achieve their ambitions and for the more general goals of gender parity.

Let's start with the gender pay gap: gender workplace statistics tell us that in the workplace as a whole, full-time weekly earnings for women are, on average, 18.8% less than for men.¹ Women earn on average \$14,500 less than men every year.² In Tasmania, the gap is smaller, at 12.8%,³ but of course average weekly earnings are lower. Women are less likely to be full-time employees (35.5% of full-time employees), more likely to be part-time (69.2%) and more likely to be casual (54.8%). And average superannuation balances for women are a startling 46.6% less than for men.⁴

¹ Australian Government, Workplace Gender Equality Agency, *Gender workplace statistics at a glance, May 2015*, viewed 1 June 2015

https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/Gender_Pay_Gap_Factsheet.pdf

² Australian Human Rights Commission, 'Gender pay gap at 20 year high' 5 September 2014, <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/news/stories/gender-pay-gap-20-year-high>

³ Australian Government, n 1.

⁴ Australian Government, n 1.

Average recent graduate salaries for women in Australia are 9.4% less than for men. Note, that is for a period that tends to predate career interruptions due to childcare. Much of this gap in starting graduate salaries can be explained by the field of education which contributes to occupational segregation in the labour force. However, even when factors such as personal characteristics, occupation, industry and education are accounted for, average graduate starting salaries for women are 4.4% less than for men.⁵

As for women in leadership: women hold just 12% of chair positions and 23.7% of directorships in Agency reporting organisations. In the period January-April 2015, 20.4% of directors in the ASX 200 were women.⁶ In Australia, just 29% of parliamentarians are women, and 20% ministers.⁷ In higher education, which is reputed to be a female friendly industry, only 24% of professors in 2012 were female, despite the fact that 42% of academic staff were women.⁸

What is my story? How did a young woman, who at 22, married a New Norfolk hop grower, crack the glass ceiling of academia and then become Tasmania 28th Governor?

It started with a good education. As a white, middle class, heterosexual 17 year-old I had many advantages. This is 1966, 50 years ago. In addition, and somewhat unusually for the time, I had parents who not only expected me to complete Year 12, they encouraged me to go to University to gain a professional qualification that would enable me to be financially independent for life. In 1966 only 27% of University students were female. At the time of my graduation in 1970, only 3 in every 100 working age Australians had a University education – in 2011 this had increased to 25%. Whilst women were definitely in the minority at Law School

⁵ Australian Government, n 1.

⁶ Australian Government, n 1.

⁷ Parliament of Australia, *Representation of Women in Australian Parliaments 2014*.

⁸ Universities Australia, *Selected Institutional Gender Equity Statistics Australia*, 14 November 2014.

when I was a student, there was in my year a cluster, at least, of young women who encouraged and supported each other.

So I studied law, graduated, gained articles of clerkship, and was admitted to practice. Then I married at 22, and spent nine months overseas on a working holiday, and came to live in New Norfolk in December 1971. I soon had a temporary job but pregnancy prevented me from accepting the offer of a permanent job in a law firm because neither maternity leave nor part time employment in legal firms was available. I had been doing some casual tutoring at the University so I continued to do that after my first baby was born in 1973. In 1975 I enrolled in a research higher degree, had another baby and was working and studying with childcare for two days a week. I finished my thesis in July 1978 just before my thirtieth birthday.

On the strength of my LLM, I was given more teaching. However, I was still only a casual employee. In 1981, both my daughters were at school at Fairview Primary and I was offered a one-year contract. My first full time academic job! I was the most junior and only female member on the academic staff at the Law School. At this time, across the University sector, just 16% of FT academics were female. Whilst I was the most junior staff member, I was certainly not the youngest. My male contemporaries were now seven or eight years ahead in terms of full-time employment with all the leave and superannuation entitlements that went with it.

Juggling work and family was always an issue. However, the flexibility of academic work made life easier. Working from home was always an option. I used every scrap of the day. I worked on the kitchen table with the children crawling over me. I took work to the swimming pool whilst they swam. I sometimes got up early in the morning when everyone was still in bed, to squeeze in an extra hour of class preparation or marking. And I had a helpful, supportive spouse. I enjoyed my work and worked (and played) hard. I said “yes” perhaps

too often, but this led to many great opportunities to work on projects that others had knocked back.

Gradually I progressed up the academic scale. In 1996 I was made a full Professor. So how is it that I managed to be promoted to the position of Professor by the age of 48? Most importantly, I had a F/T job with flexible working hours and the ability to work at home. The 3 o'clock school pick-up was manageable most days. Getting the job done was emphasised rather than hours in the office. Another key factor was having a supportive spouse and family help with caring responsibilities for my children when they were young. Both my parents and parents-in-law supported my career and were always ready to help in school holidays or if one of the girls were sick. As the children became more independent, I had the opportunity to work longer hours and working at home was always an option. Conditions were in my favour.

We have learnt that in order to close the gender pay gap, achieving equality in education participation is not enough. Educational attainment for women has been steadily improving. For more than a decade girls have been consistently more likely than boys to attain Year 12 qualifications. And since 1987 they have been more likely to be higher education students. The movement of women into previously male dominated professions is part of the explanation for equal participation in tertiary education. This has, however, been patchy. In law for example, a majority of graduates are now female. But this is not so in engineering or science. In these areas young women are underrepresented. The analysis of the gender wage gap suggests that the gap in graduate salaries, for recent graduates at least, could be narrowed if girls changed their selection and more of them chose STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) during secondary schooling. However, this is only a small part of the solution. The focus on the salaries of graduates who are under 24 and in their first post graduation job obscures later obstacles encountered by women

which lead to a gender pay gap of 18.8 per cent and to women's comparatively low superannuation balances.

Law, I think provides a good case study. The gender pay gap is worse in the legal profession – reported to be almost 36 per cent in November 2014.⁹ Why is it that there are so many women law graduates (they outnumber men) but so few female partners in legal firms, so few silks, so few judges?

What happens is that women evaporate from the legal profession post admission or at least pull back from full-time work and their career prospects suffer. The Law Council's attrition study found that 50% of part-time women with family responsibilities reported discrimination compared with 19% of full-time women employees (with family responsibilities).

So many women opt out of the law profession, leave the higher paying jobs, do not aspire to a partnership. To some extent this is a matter of choice but it is a constrained choice. Pregnancy and caring roles significantly reduce women's ability to earn comparative salaries. Having children means that three quarters of working mothers take the opportunity to change their working lives in some way: to work part-time, negotiate flexible working hours, work at home, or undertake shift work of some kind.¹⁰ But only a third of working fathers (with children under age 11 or under) change their working patterns in any way at all. In fact, on average fathers slightly increase their working hours by 4 hours a week with the birth of their first child.

In how many families is the father the primary carer of children? Of Australian families with kids under 15, 60% have a father who works full-time and a mother who either works part-time or not at all. Only 3% of such families have a

⁹ Is ambition a dirty word? March 4 2015, <http://www.smithslawyers.com.au/closing-the-gender-pay-gap/>

¹⁰ Annabel Crabb, *The Wife Drought*, 2014, citing ABS at 55.

mother who works full-time and a dad who works part-time or is at home.¹¹

Even if both are working full-time, women tend to take primary responsibility for children. In the global executive survey cited by Annabel Crabb, those who had children were asked the fundamental question, ‘Who takes more responsibility for making childcare arrangements?’ Fifty seven per cent of female senior business executives did and only one per cent of male executives did!¹²

Many explanations have been offered for the gender pay gap: gender stereotyping, industry and occupational segregation, discrimination, women’s poorer negotiation skills, reluctance to apply for promotion and so on. And there is a range of solutions: quotas and so on. However, I would like to focus on work flexibility and domestic responsibilities. Echoing Annabel Crabb and other commentators, I think it is important to focus on normalising flexible work arrangements and breaking down the male breadwinner model. In doing this we need to change perceptions of what it is to be masculine so that it is alright for men to share the domestic load, alright for a woman to have a higher status/higher earning job than her partner. We need to change the stereotypes of what it is to be male and what it is to be female.

In an article in *The Australian* last year, Shane Rodgers suggests that, post GFC, progress towards equality for women by making women’s and men’s working lives more balanced and achievable has stalled.¹³

The job market is tight and everyone wants to be seen to be working really hard. Don’t even talk about flexibility. It is a sign of weakness and flaky commitment.

¹¹ Crabb, n 15, 7.

¹² Crabb, n 15, 47.

¹³ ‘What Women Want at Work’, *The Australian*, 20 July 2015, p 14.

Rodgers argues that this is not a problem for governments or legislation. It's a problem of the attitudes of management. Men need to champion this too.

We need to prioritise getting the work done rather than working long hours at the office. Workplaces need to mainstream flexible work. This is not just about women. Many men, particularly younger men, want flexible work.

Until we have more flexible working arrangements for men and women, until part-time work is seen as real work and part of real career progression and not just a token job, until we have more equal sharing of caring responsibilities between men and women, we won't see equality in the workplace. This will require changing attitudes about what it means to be masculine. We will need to make it acceptable for men to work flexibly as well as women, to accept that the primary breadwinner is not necessarily a bloke.

And we need to support women who work so they do not to feel guilty about leaving work to pick up their children from childcare or school or for staying at home if a child is sick. And mothers should not feel guilty for working and not being a full-time stay-at-home Mum.

There are some promising developments. In the legal profession, the Law Council of Australia has recognised that there is a need to normalise work flexibility to address the problem of unconscious bias and the attrition of female employees.¹⁴ In the wider community, the Male Champions for Change (MCC) strategy launched in 2010 by the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick, invited business leaders to pledge to advance gender equality within their organisation and act as public advocates on the issue.

¹⁴ Felicity Nelson, 'The NARS report: One year on' *Lawyers Weekly*, 24 March 2015.

To close I would like to bring this back to my experience of the gender pay gap. In my early years post graduation there were obstacles. At the age of 30 I was well behind my male contemporaries with a poorly paid job as a casual academic and no eligibility for study leave, superannuation or long service leave. But I had an honours degree, a postgraduate degree and some teaching experience. Ten years later, at the age of 40, I had a tenured full-time job as lecturer but in terms of career I was still well behind my male contemporaries and younger male colleagues. However, I had a job that I loved and despite being the primary carer of my two children, I had the flexibility to work at home and I had a helpful spouse and extended family. By the time I was 48, I had been promoted three times and was a Professor. I had overtaken many of my male contemporaries and by the time I resigned from my salaried position at the University last year, I even had a respectable superannuation balance. In my case, the flexibility of my work, the fact that promotion was determined by outputs, primarily research grants and publications rather than hours in the office, explain how I managed to juggle work and caring responsibilities and to crack that glass ceiling.

Thank you.