

**MULTICULTURAL WOMEN'S COUNCIL OF TASMANIA  
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY ADDRESS  
HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AM  
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA  
LEGACY HOUSE HOBART, SATURDAY 12 MARCH 2016**

Good evening everyone.

(Acknowledgment of the traditional and original owners of the land).

Sajini Sumar has asked me to talk about:

- my experiences as the first female Governor of Tasmania;
- and to consider the theme of multicultural women who have had no or limited voice and to reflect on whether I have had similar experiences throughout my career.

Being the first female in a position has its advantages and some disadvantages. This was something I realised when I became the first female Head of School and the first Dean of the Law Faculty at the University of Tasmania. When I had my first fulltime academic job in 1981 only 16% of fulltime academics were women; when I became a Professor in 1996, the percentage of professors who were women was probably less than 16% – although by 2012 it had increased to 24%. This meant that I was called upon to sit on many selection committees, promotion committees and other committees all in the name of gender balance. I began to resent this. On one occasion I was called to ask if I would sit on yet another selection committee. I was able to respond that I would be away in the UK on study leave.

‘So what will you be doing’, the caller asked. ‘Having a sex change,’ I replied!

Of course gender balance on committees is a good thing and being the first, or one of a few, does offer many leadership opportunities, to be a role model for young women and to mentor more junior female staff.

And, I think, it was this leadership aspect, the role model, being the first female Governor of Tasmania, that led me to accept the position.

The role of Governor is not something that is well understood. A local journalist was reported as saying recently that really all the Governor

does is drink red wine and eat canapés. It is rather more than that. Ibn summary:

- a constitutional and legal role;
- a ceremonial role (for example swearing in new ministers and new judges; presenting awards);
- a community role: to interact with the community to emphasise that the things that bind the community are stronger than the things that divide us; to encourage values of tolerance and mutual respect; to encourage high levels of achievement in arts, education, industry and sport; to encourage Tasmanians to be a caring society, to support volunteering and so on.

As part of the community role, the Governor is Patron of around 100 community organisations.

It seems accepted that the Governor has considerable latitude in selecting issues or themes to focus on as part of this community/leadership role. I have selected:

- the empowerment of women and associated with that, issues of family violence and gender violence;
- education; aspirations ... engagement; bullying.
- promotion and protection of our national parks and wilderness.

As Governor I am afforded many opportunities to speak about these issues. Some examples: in the Webber Ethics Lecture I spoke on ethical relationships in the context of gendered violence, and challenged schools, boys schools particularly to have respectful relationships training; in the Sandy Duncanson Social Justice lecture I talked about the limits of law reform and society's responsibility to do something about attitudinal change.

On school visits and talks and speeches to school students I talk to them about education, bullying, and about the gender inequalities underlying the gender pay gap, the leadership deficit and the problem of gender violence, respectful relationships and sexism. I argue that empowering women and challenging the rigid gender role stereotypes are key to tackling gendered violence and the gender pay gap. I point out that just educating our girls to the same standard as boys does not go far enough.

And of course I get many opportunities to talk about these issues on International Women's Days. To highlight the issue of rigid gender role stereotypes, I ask why is it that there are 220 words for a promiscuous girl (slut, scrubber and tart) and all of them derogatory but only 20 for a boy and most of these could be interpreted as flattering (stud, stallion and legend).

The second point Sajini asked me to address relates to multicultural women who have had limited voice and whether I have had similar experiences in my career. At times I have had limited voice. As a young mother the absence of part-time postgraduate scholarships; the absence of maternity leave and permanent part-time work was an obstacle. The only option to fulltime work was casual work, which was so poorly paid and exploitative. But for the most part I have been enormously lucky and I am relishing the voice I have as Governor, as well as the Pinot and canapés.

Thank you.