

**AUSTRALIAN MANUFACTURING WORKER'S UNION DINNER WOMEN'S
FORUM – SPEECH BY HER EXCELLENCY
PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA, THURSDAY 24 AUGUST 2017**

Good evening.

I begin by paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land – to pay respect to those that have passed before us and to acknowledge today's Tasmanian Aboriginal community who are the custodians of this land.

It is a great pleasure for me to here this evening to take part in this Women's Forum with so many amazing women and to talk you about a topic that is very close to my heart, opening up opportunities for young women and all women through further education or work choices in male dominated industries and professions. "There are no limits."

As Tasmania's First female Governor it is probably natural that gender equality and empowering women should be something I am very keen to support.

Since the time I left school and went to University there have been many advances in gender equity in education and employment. In 1966, my first year at University, only a quarter of students were female – and they were mainly in the Arts Faculty – very few in Science, none in Engineering and a handful in Law. There were very few female academics, none in law and there were no female professors at the University.

And this is not just Tasmania. Last night at a dinner for delegates attending the University of Tasmania's symposium Reimagining and Revitalising Communities through Higher Education, I sat next to an American professor who told me that at his university when he was a law student there were 400 males students and six females.

When I finished my law degree, there were very few female legal practitioners, no female magistrates or judges, no female partners in law firms. When I joined the academic staff at the Law School in the 1970s as a tutor, I was the only female member of staff.

Forty years later things have improved. For some years now more girls than boys complete Year 12 and there are more women graduates from universities than men including in law. In the legal profession in Australia in 2014 there was close to an even gender split with men comprising 51.5% of those in legal practice and females 48.5%.¹

There are some occupations then where female participation has increased so that they are no longer male dominated: law is one and medicine another. However, our labour market remains highly gender segregated by industry and occupation and this is a pattern that has persisted over the last two decades. The most male dominated industries are mining and construction with just 12% of female employees, followed by electricity, gas, water and waste (21%), transport (23%) and manufacturing (28%); agriculture, forestry and fishing (34%) and wholesale trade (31%).

The construction industry is said to be Australia's most male dominated industry. Only 12% of the total construction workforce of some 1 million are women; professional positions are 14% female, but 'in the trades very few women brave Australian work sites' (less than 2%).² And it is not because women lack the physical strength. With technological advances taking care of much of the heavy lifting, this is not an issue.

Looking at WGEA data by *occupation* rather than *industry* shows the following occupations to be male dominated: machinery operators and drivers; technicians and trade workers; labourers and managers.

And we know that services like the police and defence (army navy and air force) are male dominated occupations. In the ADF women made up 15.3% of permanent ADF personnel as at 30 June 2015. In combat and security, engineering, construction and aviation ADF positions it was lower. In Tasmania Police, 31% of sworn police officers are women according to the latest annual report. Experts suggest that women need to comprise 35% for adequate cultural integration and a workplace culture that is comfortable and welcoming for women.

¹ 2014 Law Society National Profile, 2015, 2.

² Louise Chappell and Natalie Galea, 'Construction is the last frontier for women at work' *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 December 2016.

New areas are opening up to women all the time. ABC's Landline program last Sunday told the story of the shake-up in the North Australian cattle industry with 'the masculine image of cowboys and stockmen fast being replaced by young ambitious and talented women'. It featured 29 year-old Emily Bryant, who, as the first ever female station manager for a corporate company in Australia, is in charge of about a dozen staff and 27,000 head of cattle on Auvergne Station. We saw her calmly navigating stock through cattleyards, on horseback and flying a plane. Just a few decades ago women were completely banned from stock camps. Consolidated Pastoral Company stated that last year 70% of its recruitment applications were from women and 25% of their head stockmen are female.³

Despite such good news stories, the statistics on occupational gender segregation show that progress is slow. There are many good reasons to tackle the issue of gender segregation.

The shortage of skilled STEM workers

We have a shortage of workers in Australia with science, technology, engineering and mathematical skills and the lack of women in STEM is a waste of resources.

Moreover, a considerable body of research suggests a link between gender equality and better organisational performance. While there is a range of reasons to explain this link, one factor is that diversity brings together varied perspectives, produces a more holistic analysis of the issues an organisation faces, and spurs greater effort, leading to improved decision-making.

So we need more females to study STEM subjects at school and University. Girls are less likely to study STEM subjects at school, not because they are not as good at these subjects as boys (there is evidence that this is not so) but because of stereotypes associating science and maths with boys.

As a matter of equity, we need to tackle workplace gender segregation

Average remuneration in female dominated organisations is lower than in male dominated organisations. Average full-time total remuneration in male

³ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-08-20/women-taking-up-the-reins-in-the-northern-cattle-industry/8815686> accessed 22 August 2017.

dominated organisations was \$92,317 and \$77,734 in female-dominated organisations – a difference of \$24,485.

So one of the ways of addressing the gender pay gap is to encourage more women into the higher paying male dominated industries and occupations. Many of those industries tend to have a smaller gender pay gap than the average gap which, in terms of F/T average weekly earnings, is 16% less for women than men. So looking at starting remuneration for graduate trainees by industry, the highest salaries for men and women are in Mining, and Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Service Industries. In Mining there is a gender pay gap in favour of women on March 2017 figures as there is in Construction.⁴

And in terms of equity as a reason for opening up male dominated industries and professions to women, it is unfair to deny women access to the same range of stimulating and diverse occupations as men.

Gender stereotypes work both way and this is well worth remembering. As well as encouraging more women into skilled technical roles, we need to encourage men into female-dominated industries and jobs – primary teaching, aged care, nursing and social work. ABS statistics suggest that between 1995 and 2015 we have actually seen a decline in the proportion of men in the female dominated industries of health care and social assistance, and education and training. Currently only one in ten nurses is male and this trend is set to continue based on student enrolments and graduations. As well as encouraging women to ‘step up’ into male-dominated roles, we need to encourage men to undertake the caring-based work that has traditionally been the domain of women.

There are a number of advantages in encouraging more men into women dominated occupations. One is that when more men enter a female-dominated industry, rates of pay increase. Another is that it would help challenge the traditional stereotype that caring-based work is primarily the domain of women. It is this stereotype that helps explain the gender gap and the fact in relation to Australian families with children under 15, 60% have a father who works full-time and a mother who works part-time or not at all (in paid employment) and only 3% have a mother who works full-time and a father who works part time or not at all.

⁴ WGEA, Higher education enrolments and graduate labour market statistics, March 2017.

And in a 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!⁵

The gender pay gap is not surprising then. Women tend to resign from full-time positions to care for children or pull-back to part time work and their career prospects suffer. Many of the male dominated industries and professions in particular have inflexible work practices and entrenched expectations of extremely long work hours including regular Saturday and Sunday work. Part-time work is resisted by employers and is seen as a flaky commitment. It is not surprising that women leave such work-places. It could be said to be a choice. But if it is, it is a constrained choice, constrained by gender stereotypes and work-place culture.

Change *is* happening. This is evident by the fact we have here tonight, the first female Governor of Tasmania; and Donna Adams, the first female Assistant Commissioner of Police; Lara Giddings, the first female Premier of Tasmania; Rebecca White, the first female leader of the Opposition; and so many ground breaking women; and not forgetting the Golden Diversity team showing us by winning the National F1 in Schools Challenge that STEM *is* for girls.

I encourage you all to embrace the “no limits” theme and I am looking forward to talking to many of you very soon in the networking session.

Thank you.

⁵ Crabb, n 15, 47.