

**LEADERSHIP AND INCLUSIVE CULTURE BREAKFAST EVENT AT THE TENTH  
INTERNATIONAL MINING GEOLOGY CONFERENCE 2017**

**SPEECH BY HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE**

**KATE WARNER AC, GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA**

**HOTEL GRAND CHANCELLOR, THURSDAY 21 SEPTEMBER 2017**

Good morning everyone and welcome to the Leadership and Inclusive Culture Breakfast Event at the Tenth International Mining Geology Conference 2017.

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.

I acknowledge Colin Moorhead, President, AusIMM and distinguished guests.

I want to warmly welcome our interstate guests in particular to Hobart and do hope you get time to enjoy all that we have to offer here in Tasmania.

As this event is labelled a leadership and inclusive culture breakfast, I have decided to speak about why gender equity is important, and what we can do to accelerate gender parity and inclusiveness – a subject that is close to my heart and which needs no prompting for me to speak about!

It is well known that historically the mining and resources sector has been perceived to be a male domain, with the representation of women remaining low.

Australian Workplace Gender Equality Agency data published in 2016 showed that females comprised 14% of employees in the mining industry,<sup>1</sup> down from 17% in 2013.<sup>2</sup> It also showed that the majority of women were employed in the lower paid clerical and administrative roles (where 78% were female). At CEO level, just 2.5% were women.

There are good reasons for addressing the under-representation of women in employment and in male dominated industries in particular. First, it is economically sound to expand the labour pool by tapping into under-represented groups such as females and that there is a strong business case to do so. According to the Grattan Institute, there are three big reforms that could have a marked effect on the prosperity of Australia and one of these is increasing female workforce participation.

I was intrigued to read that increasing women's participation in your industry reduces the cost of asset depreciation and financial costs associated with workplace accidents. The Chamber of Minerals and Energy Western Australia has reported:<sup>3</sup>

... When women are part of the workforce at mine sites, better care is taken of the equipment; there are improved workplace relations through the moderating impact of soft skills such as negotiation and the overall safety record has [improved].

It has also been found that teams with gender diversity improve decision making, innovation and financial results.<sup>4</sup>

As well as a business case for increasing female workforce participation there are equity grounds for doing so.

Mining is the highest paying industry for men and women, but has one of the lowest participation rates for women. The fact that women are over-represented in lower paid occupations is one the reasons for the gender pay

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<sup>1</sup> Workplace Gender Equality Agency, *Gender composition of the workforce: by industry*, April 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Minerals Council of Australia, 'It's not just a program', MCA Workforce Gender Diversity Review, White Paper, June 2013, 3. It seems it does tend to rise and fall in line with economic cycles.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Minerals Council of Australia, n 5, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Minerals Council of Australia, n 5, 4.

gap (currently 16% for average full-time weekly earnings). It helps explain why it is that while more females now graduate from university, the gender pay gap persists. Clearly, increasing the proportion of women in male dominated, higher paying work is one way of addressing the gender pay gap.

So females comprise just 14% of the workplace in the Mining Industry. The experience of other occupations shows things can change. In 1966 when I started University, there were very few female law students and when I started work in the legal profession as an articled clerk, there were just two women lawyers practising in Tasmania.

Fast forward four decades or so. There are now more female law graduates than males each year in Australia. In 2014 there was close to an even gender split in the Australian legal profession with men comprising 51% of those in legal practice and females 49%.<sup>5</sup>

However, the gender pay gap is worse in the legal profession – reported to be almost 30% in 2016.<sup>6</sup> Why is it that there are so many women law graduates 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.

There are lessons here for your industry. It is not enough to increase the participation rate of women in male dominated courses such as geology and engineering, although this is an important first step.

That first step is preceded by addressing the under-representation of girls in STEM subjects at school. There is empirical evidence that girls are discouraged from developing their maths and science skills from a young age, by the stereotype that maths and science are for boys, but research also tells us that boys aren't better at these subjects than girls.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> 2014 Law Society National Profile, 2015, 2.

<sup>6</sup> WGEA Data Explorer, <http://data.wgea.gov.au/comparison/?id1=115&id2=115>, accessed 12 May 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Adam Grant, 'Differences between Men and Women are Vastly Exaggerated' 7 August 2017, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/differences-between-men-women-vastly-exaggerated-adam-grant>, accessed 9 August 2017.

The first step – increased enrolments and graduations in non-traditional degrees for women and increased enrolments in technical trade education – needs to translate to increased employment of women in the mining industry. Once there, they need to be nurtured, retained and promoted.

The literature in relation to improving gender diversity in the mining industry is impressive. Issues such as the need for mentoring for women; for there to be female role models in leadership roles;<sup>8</sup> the need to address women's lack of self-confidence compared to men; and for workplaces to more accommodating to different leadership styles.

Some weeks ago I attended the 2017 Rio Tinto Women in Resources National Awards ceremony. And I have to say, I was impressed. This event demonstrated a real commitment to improving gender equality in the sector. I will relate just two of the award stories I heard that evening.

The gold producer St Barbara Limited won the Excellence in Company Diversity Program. In 2010 it set a target of 30% representation of women in the workforce by 2018. This included an increase in the overall percentage of women in the workplace; an increase in the number of women returning from parental leave; and a reduction in the overall gender pay gap. A number of successful strategies were implemented with the result that there has been an increase in the proportion of women working flexibly; staff turnover was reduced from 35% in 2010 to 5.5% last year, and there was a reduced overall pay gap from 43% in 2007 to 12% in 2017.

Among a number of women awarded for their work in improving the representation of women in mining by leadership and advocacy was one young engineer who had developed a group of 60 volunteers to develop school based presentations to encourage girls to pursue science, technology, engineering and maths subjects. The ceremony provided a platform to showcase and encourage female talent in the industry, demonstrating to younger women (and their mothers and fathers) a set of path breakers and role models across occupation categories in mineral and resources and to celebrate the advances that have been made in gender equity.

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<sup>8</sup> I understand that according to 2013 data there were only two CEOs among the 89 mining companies reporting to WGEA: Minerals Council of Australia, n 5, 41.

Workplace culture is another issue particularly relevant to mining and resources. Women often don't stay in male dominated industries because the workplace culture is not inclusive; and an inclusive culture is difficult to achieve without a critical mass of females. In the context of police services research has suggested that a critical mass needs to be at least 35% for adequate cultural integration.

I read of a recent incident at Ekati diamond mine in Canada where a camera was found hidden in the women's toilets. The camera was taken to an administrator's office for safekeeping until security arrived but in the meantime it disappeared. Of course it is not just in mining that workplace culture can be challenging and uncomfortable for women. I was reminded of this a few weeks ago when a female student reported to me what she had seen when forced to use the male toilets in building after hours when the female toilets were not available. On the toilet wall was a list of girls' names with their mobile phone number and descriptions of sexual acts they were willing to perform.

Dealing with sexism in workplace culture demands leadership from men as well as women. Men need to speak out against such things, be critical of sexist jokes and language and condescending behaviour towards women.

From personal experience, I would also like to focus on the need for workplace flexibility to support attracting and retaining women. For me this was key. Working flexibly when I had young children, the ability to pick them up from school, juggle things when they were sick and in school holidays meant that I was able to stay in the workforce, meet the performance expectations of my job as an academic in teaching and research and gain promotion to the position of professor.

For too many women, women's caring responsibilities inhibit career progression. Their careers are derailed because of caring responsibilities and breaking back into work after a gap can be difficult. Juggling care responsibilities can be particularly challenging when working in remote locations, when a lot of travel is required and for FIFO positions. In these

situations, even greater support is needed for parents in terms of child care and so on.

It is often said that many women choose to leave the work force; or that they choose to work in less demanding lower paid employment. But their choices are so often constrained choices:

>constrained by an inability to commit to work in industries that have a culture of over-work and long hours;

>constrained by gender-role stereotypes which assume the primary care giver must be female.

Workplaces need to mainstream flexible work, for men and for women. Employers should not treat part-time work and parental leave as a problem, and not marginalise employees as a result, or regard such options as a sign of flaky commitment.

Cultural change and gender equality is not just a matter for the mining industry. Societal and cultural norms need to change to break down the stereotype of the male and primary breadwinner and the female as primary carer. One way of doing this is to encourage men into female dominated professions of nursing, child care, primary teaching and social work to help break down the assumption that caring-based work is for women. Gender stereotypes work both ways.

And the criminologist in me has to add that the benefits of breaking down rigid gender role stereotypes has the additional benefit of tackling the underlying causes of gender violence. But that is another story.

Thank you for inviting me to speak at your breakfast and I hope you have a very successful conference.