

Women Supporting Women
Remarks by
Her Excellency the Honourable Barbara Baker AC
Governor of Tasmania
Government House, Wednesday 28 July 2021

Welcome to Government House.

It is a great pleasure to be hosting your group today, supporting women across Agencies in development and leadership opportunities.

I begin by paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land—the palawa people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community, who have survived invasion and dispossession, and who continue to maintain their identity, culture and Indigenous rights.

It is opportune for me to host this networking session, as I have just finished reading Hillary Clinton’s book *What Happened* in which she details the sexism she has encountered during her 2016 campaign and all her working life. I agree with her statement that “the moment for women’s equality is still happening, still is urgent and vital as ever.”¹

In another book I have just started reading, *The Authority Gap*, author Mary Ann Sieghart defines the authority gap by the way women are underestimated, talked over, ignored, patronised, and generally not taken as seriously as a man. I am sure we all have our own stories about our “authority gaps.” I have many, but it would take too long to tell you now.

Mary Ann Sieghart describes the gap as “the mother of all gender gaps,” because if women are not taken as seriously as men, they are going to be paid less, and promoted less.²

She argues that much of the authority gap is due to unconscious bias, ingrained into both men and women from what we have seen in our families and the culture from our childhood.

¹ *What Happened*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018, page 113.

² *The Authority Gap*, New York: Doubleday, 2021, page 3.

In her final chapter, to which I skipped, titled *No Need To Despair*, she suggests many changes from individuals, organisations and legislatures to close the gap, such as better representation of women as CEO's and on boards, more transparency about pay and promotions in the workplace, affordable child-care, and flexible workplaces.

She urges us to notice and call out men if a woman is being interrupted or being ignored in meetings. We need to make it normal for women to be in positions of authority. With each woman in a leadership position, it becomes easier for the next, as we get used to the idea.³

The book is well researched and worth reading.

Many world leaders, including Julia Gillard and Hillary Clinton were interviewed about how to combat the authority gap.

There is still a need for equity in Australia. The full-time gender pay gap is 13 percent, with women earning on average \$242.20 per week less than men.⁴ Our women on average spend nearly 32 hours a week on household chores and caring for children compared with nearly 19 hours by men.⁵

Senior women have an important role to encourage, support and mentor young women to assist them to be taken seriously and to achieve senior roles.

We should strive to achieve equality of gender of senior positions in the workforce.

A group such as this one can provide this encouragement, important connections and professional relationships with other women, and can share their experiences.

I hope we all get a lot out of our networking today.

Thank you.

³ *The Authority Gap*, page 306.

⁴ *Our Watch Quick Facts*, citing ABS 2021.

⁵ *Our Watch Quick Facts*, citing Wilkins, R. and Lass, I, *The Household Income and Labour Dynamics Australia: Selected findings from Waves 1 to 16*. Melbourne: Melbourne Institute: Applied Economic & Social Research, University of Melbourne.