

**TASMANIA POLICE COMMISSIONED OFFICERS' MESS DINNER
SPEECH BY HER EXCELLENCY
PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AM
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
TASMANIA POLICE ACADEMY, ROKEBY, THURSDAY 4 AUGUST 2016**

Good evening everyone and thank you for inviting Dick and me to attend this Formal Mess Dinner.

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 wish to acknowledge Commissioner Darren Hine, Commander Glenn Keating, Commander Mark Mewis, members of the Tasmania Police Commissioned Officers' Mess and distinguished guests.

I have been asked to speak about the positive aspects of gender equity and diversity in the workplace. Before I go into detail on that topic, I want to preface my comments by the fact that it has become accepted for Governors to speak out on issues of social justice if they can do so whilst avoiding direct criticism of government policy. Doing this calls for careful judgement. However, I see it as an important aspect of the Governor's leadership role in encouraging Tasmanians to be a caring society – caring for others and for the environment in which we live.

During my term as Governor, to begin with at least, I have decided to focus on the issues of gender violence, gender equality and education. In many respects these are related issues. As a criminologist, law reformer and university teacher they have always been areas of interest. And I think they align nicely with the fact that I am Tasmania's first female Governor.

In terms of gender equity, in the area of education we have made huge advances in developed countries including in Australia: for more than a decade girls are more likely to attain Year 12 qualifications; and since 1987 they are more likely to be higher education students.

But: labour participation is less – 58.5% compared with 71.2%; gender pay gap – F/T weekly earnings for females are 19.1% less in Australia (November 2015 figures); and average superannuation balances are 46.6% less than for men.

Women are under-represented in higher paid jobs and in leadership positions: 20% of directors in the ASX 200 were women (May 2015 figures); around 29% of parliamentarians are women (27% in the House of Representatives after the last election, and 37% in the Senate); 20% only are ministers (23% in the Second Turnbull Ministry). And 29% of local councillors are women – many communities are represented by a line-up of largely older men.

Universities are no better. In 2012 only 24% of academic staff were professors despite the fact that 42% of academic staff were women.

And in the legal profession the gender pay gap is worse (36% female in November 2014). Despite the fact that female law graduates outnumber males, they are less likely to be partners, less likely to be silks (only 8%) and less likely to be judges (28% to 37%). What happens is that women evaporate from the legal profession or pull back from full-time work and their career prospects suffer.¹

Let me now turn to the police. Perhaps more so than for many other occupations, policing was thought to a man's job. When women were first allowed entry in the second decade of the Twentieth Century, many were excluded by minimum height restrictions, by the marriage bar until 1966 which excluded married women from recruitment and required them to resign on marriage, and later by rigorous obstacle course entry tests, which were designed to subvert equal opportunity legislation.²

Underlying these restrictions was the pervasive view that women were possessed of 'inherent physical and emotional weaknesses' and so when they were allowed in in small numbers, women police officers were usually restricted to working in traditional social work-type roles, despite a large body of research showing that women have the same capability as men in carrying out the physical demands of police work.³ When women were later integrated

¹ Law Council of Australia, *National Attrition and Re-engagement Study*, 2012.

² Tim Prenzler and Georgina Sinclair, 'The status of women police officers: an international review' (2013) 41 (2) *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice*, 115-113.

³ Tim Prenzler, Jenny Fleming and Amanda King, 'Gender equity in Australian and New Zealand policing: a five-year review' (2010) 12(4) *International Journal of Police Science and Management* 584-595, 585.

into areas such as patrol work, they experienced significant problems of sexual harassment and informal discrimination in deployment and promotion.

In Australia, in 1994 the percentage of sworn female officers in Australian police forces was 13.7%. This had increased to 24% in 2007/8 (26% in Tasmania) according to Tim Prenzler et al's 2010 review.⁴ This was in line with the position in most developed democracies, where the percentage of sworn women remained below 25%.⁵ While the recruiting rates for women had improved to around one third (in Tasmania they reached 50% in 2003/4 and were 42% three years later), the authors were concerned that the level nationally seemed stuck at around one third and concerned about the higher resignation rates for women, suggesting that this may be for work-life balance reasons.⁶

Two positive findings from Prenzler's study were, first, that women were slowly but surely moving up the ranks although they were still grossly under-represented at the higher ranks. And secondly, women appeared to be fairly well distributed across police duties and organisational elements, with only a few cases of possible residual gender stereotyping.⁷

What do the latest figures show? The latest national figures that I could find indicated that the proportion of female sworn and unsworn police officers was around 32% in 2011-12,⁸ a figure that inflates the proportion because of the inclusion of unsworn police employees. The latest Tasmanian Department of Police and Emergency Management Annual Report states that for the year 2014-5 the proportion of female sworn police officers was 31%. This is edging up from 28.8% in 2011, a figure that Prenzler and Sinclair found to be the highest in the 18 English-speaking regions they examined.⁹ Research commissioned by the British Association of Women Police has suggested that a minimum of 35% of female officers was needed for adequate cultural integration.¹⁰

⁴ Prenzler et al, n 3, 588.

⁵ Cited by Prenzler et al, n 3, 585.

⁶ Prenzler et al, n 3, 593.

⁷ Prenzler, et al n 3, 593.

⁸ Australian Institute of Criminology, *Facts & Figures 2013*, Figure 110. *Facts & Figures 2014* (published 2016) does not include this information.

⁹ Prenzler and Sinclair, n 2, p 13 (electronic in-press version).

¹⁰ J Brown, P Hegarty and D O'Neill, *Playing with Numbers*, 2006. Review commissioned by British Association for Women Policing.

In terms of commissioned officers, only 9% are female in Tasmania Police.¹¹ I will come back briefly to strategies for achieving gender equality in the workplace later. But first what are the benefits of gender equality, broadly and in the policing context?

The Australian Government Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA)¹² tells us that the benefits of workplace gender equality are that:

Gender equality attracts top talent:

A workplace that is equally appealing for women and men will provide employers with access to the entire talent pool. As women are increasingly more highly educated than men, a workplace that is not attractive to women risks losing the best talent to competitors.

This applies equally to the police force.

Gender equality can reduce expenses:

Replacing a departing employee can cost 75% or more of their annual wage. As both women and men are more likely to remain with an organisation they view as fair, employee turnover for an organisation offering gender equality can be reduced, thereby decreasing the high expense of recruitment.

This also applies to the police. The costs of recruit training are not insignificant, and so attrition is an important issue.

Companies and organisations with gender equality perform better:

A considerable body of research suggests a link between gender equality and better organisational performance. While there are 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.

There are a number of reasons why increasing diversity, especially gender diversity, improves the quality of performance in the police force in particular:¹³ in the context of policing, a more diverse workplace will result in a broader range of information for decision-making and a wider range of possible solutions; a willingness to challenge established ways of thinking and to consider new options.

¹¹ Four of a total of 54.

¹² <https://www.wgea.gov.au/learn/about-workplace-gender-equality> (accessed 3 August 2016).

¹³ The following points are largely taken from Prenzler et al n 3; Marisa Silverstri, Stephen Tong and Jennifer Brown, 'Gender and police leadership: time for a paradigm shift?' (2013) 15(1) *International Journal of Police Science and Management* 61-73 at 64-65.

Female offenders and victims of crime have the right to access female police officers when they choose. (This is a human rights argument – in the case of offenders, failure to allow personal searches to be conducted by a same sex police officer could breach the right to security of the person and the right to privacy).

Women officers demonstrate greater empathy skills in dealing with women and children, especially those subject to physical or sexual abuse. This is of enormous importance in gaining the trust of victims who will be witnesses. Retraction of a complaint, refusal to be a witness are common problems with child witnesses, with rape complainants and with victims of domestic violence.

Many of the problems of modern policing – an aggressive patrol style, abuse of power, excessive force and an emphasis on arrest and charge – are associated with a male-dominated police culture. The fact that women are less likely to abuse their power and attract allegations of misconduct has long been an argument for employing more women in police organisations.

Two inquiries into police corruption in Australia (the Wood Royal Commission and the Fitzgerald Report) have shown that there is a positive correlation between increasing numbers of women police officers and reducing levels of corruption; and there is evidence women adopt a higher ethical code of conduct.

Women are more likely to have a more service-oriented commitment to policing than their male counterparts. (I understand this to be important in modern policing: service oriented versus traditional, crime control reactive policing). Similarly it is said that women have stronger relationships with the community and are better equipped in developing long-term relationships in partnerships.

It has been argued that women adopt more transformational leadership styles than their male counterparts. It has been demonstrated in England that senior policewomen are engaged in a more holistic, participative, consultative, inclusive and transformative style of leadership which is not usually associated with police organisations. It is said this is likely to be more successful in bringing about long-term change in policing and bringing the service in line with a greater 'ethical' and 'quality of service' culture and ultimately greater legitimacy in its relationship with citizens. Christine Nixon's leadership style has

been described in these terms – consultative, inclusive and effective in achieving long-term cultural and organisational change.

The next two points made by WGEA I will skate over as they are less relevant to the police.

Gender equality improves national productivity and competitiveness:

The World Economic Forum has found a strong correlation between a country's competitiveness and how it educates and uses its female talent. In the Australian context, the Grattan Institute has argued that removing disincentives for women to enter the workforce should be an economic reform priority. It has found that increasing female workforce participation by 6% has the potential to add \$25 billion each year to the Australian economy.

Gender inequality wastes resources:

While gender inequality exists, Australia is not only missing out on the important contributions women make to the economy, we are also wasting the years of investment in the higher education of young women. Around 58% of Australia's university graduates are women but only 67% of working aged women are currently in paid work, compared to 78% of men, indicating Australia is failing to capture the substantial economic contribution tertiary educated women offer.

Gender inequality in the workplace is unfair to women:

Aside from the wider social benefits of gender equality in policing, women should have equal access to the benefits of a policing career, and to deployment in the same range of roles and equal access to promotion. Policing can offer secure and stimulating work for women, with diverse career opportunities, and increasing opportunities for flexible employment.¹⁴

How should gender equity in policing be achieved?

It seems that the proportion of sworn female police officers has plateaued at about one third and that progress in increasing the number of sworn women police officers in higher ranks is slow. Clearly affirmative action and other gender equity strategies are necessary. Examples include targeted recruitment, flexible employment, childcare assistance, rejoining policies, and mentoring programs. The inclusion of women on all selection and promotion committees is an important equal opportunity measure, as well as equity units, sexual

¹⁴ Prenzler and Sinclair, n 2, p 3.

harassment officers, and the inclusion of equity content and anti-harassment content information in training.

As to whether or not a multi-point system of entry for specialisation or leadership roles will improve women's participation and status in policing is unclear. Some commentators suggest that this risks pushing women even further into the wilderness as 'outsiders', noting that women are already constructed and conceived as 'outsiders' to the project of policing.¹⁵

A number of Australian Police Forces have set a 50/50 recruitment quota, such as South Australia, where the Police Commissioner has also promised to ensure gender equity in working groups, officer courses and internal committees.¹⁶ Queensland and the Northern Territory¹⁷ are also recruiting an equal number of men and women in 2016. This is not supported by 86% of sworn officers in South Australia.¹⁸ However, it has the support of the Police Union in Queensland on condition the requirements for entry are not relaxed.¹⁹ In Tasmania there is an equal gender split in the 20 recruits for 2016.²⁰

The suggestion that female police officers are resigning at a rate above their representation in the ranks is concerning. More research needs to be done on this issue, to see why it is that women are resigning.²¹

Some would argue that this is a matter of choice – women choose to resign from paid employment to have children, or to care for a partner or family member, to work part-time or flexibly; women choose not to apply for promotion as regularly as men and so on. But it is a constrained choice,

¹⁵ Silvestri et al, n 12, 68.

¹⁶ SA Police recruitment aiming for gender balance from 2016, ABC News, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-12-15/gender-balance-recruitment-south-australia-police/7027978> (accessed 1 August 2016)

¹⁷ Kieran Banks, 'New recruitment plan set to drive up number of female police officer in NT', NT News, October 14, 2015, <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/new-recruitment-plan-to-drive-up-number-of-female-police-officers-in-nt/news-story/9515668b2b134cb947468e3eea578b8d?sv=345ebd5e85890f9825952f9581c77184> accessed 1 August 2016.

¹⁸ Elizabeth Henson SA Police voice over reforms, The Advertiser, June 19, 2016, <http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/news/south-australia/sa-police-voice-fears-over-reforms-they-say-are-designed-to-achieve-budget-cuts/news-story/2f3ceb273de7d3ccc8efe9b561a24a05> (accessed 1 August 2016)

¹⁹ Trenton Akers, More women officers set to change the face of policing in Queensland, The Courier Mail, January 26, 2016.

²⁰ <http://www.police.tas.gov.au/news-events/media-releases/welcome-recruit-course-12016/> (accessed 1 August 2016).

²¹ Prenzler et al n 2.

constrained by rigid gender roles. In so many well-paid areas of employment, flexible work practices on paper are not encouraged in reality; part-time workers are overlooked for promotion and leadership positions. It is so much harder to be promoted, to accept and juggle a leadership role if you have primary responsibility for domestic matters. It is likely to be the same in the police force. In fact more so, the ability to work flexibly or from home is likely be more limited that it is in say, an academic role.

The reality is that women with school-aged children take primary responsibility for domestic tasks. 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 mother who works full-time and a dad who works part-time or is at home.²²

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 culturally accepted for men to share the domestic load, okay 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. 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.

Rigid gender stereotypes underlie gender inequity. It is the cause that explains why it is that females are more than four times likely to be a victim of sexual assault than males and why a woman is more than three times likely to be a victim of domestic violence from a partner than a man.

Allowing women to be closer to a half than a third of sworn police officers and to be equally represented in police management roles would not only have the advantages for policing that I enumerated above, it would send a powerful message helping to counter attitudes such as the importance of men being tough and strong (a quarter of young people endorse this view), that women should know their place (16% of young people think that is the case),²³ that women like a man to be in charge of the household (28% agree that this is the

²² Annabel Crabb, *The Wife Drought*, 2014, 7.

²³ *The Line Campaign, Summary of Research Findings*, 2015, p 4.

case)²⁴. To have an Australia free of gender violence we will first have to have a country where women are respected, valued and treated as equals in public and private life.

Thank you for inviting me to speak on this issue. In my research for this speech, I found that one of the most important indicators of improved gender equity in policing is police leadership support along with support for flexible employment options.²⁵

So Commissioner and commissioned officers, it's up to you!

²⁴ Vichealth, *Australians Attitudes to Violence Against Women 2013*, Research Summary, p 6.

²⁵ Prenzler and Sinclair, n 2, citing Charlesworth et al. (2009).