

**WOMEN IN DESIGN HARVEST DINNER
SPEECH BY HER EXCELLENCY
PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AM
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
DESIGN TASMANIA LAUNCESTON
SATURDAY 23 JULY 2016**

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

I begin by acknowledging the traditional and original owners of this land – to pay respect to their elders past and present and to acknowledge today's Tasmanian Aboriginal community who are the custodians of this land.

I congratulate Design Tasmania's initiative in holding this, the second annual Women in Design colloquium and I am so pleased to be here to support it.

As part of my community and leadership role as Governor, I have some freedom to choose issues on which to focus during my term, and the empowerment of women is one of them.

My background is as a legal academic, a criminal lawyer and criminologist, with an interest in gender violence, and I see the empowerment of women, and the breaking down of rigid gender stereotypes as a solution to the problem of domestic violence and sexual assault of women. And I have had many opportunities to speak to women's groups across a range of industries, occupations and areas: Women in Agriculture (at their biennial conference), Women in Local Government, Unions Tasmania Women's Conference, and the Women's Chiefs of Enterprise Group.

And when I am opening a national or international conference, for example at the Engineers Australia 36th Hydrology and Water Resources Symposium, I like to observe how many of the speakers are women and how many members of that particular profession are women. In the case of Engineers, only about 14% of those enrolled in Engineering courses and related technologies are women.¹

In the background briefing we received from Design Tasmania's Karina Clarke, I read that females are under-represented in design programs at Universities

¹ <http://www.universityrankings.com.au/gender-balance-ratio.html>

and in the design profession, particularly in product or industrial design and game design.

Even in architecture, where there are equal proportions of women and men entering and graduating from architecture schools, there is a disparity in retention rates, with more women leaving the profession, a scarcity of women in senior management roles and a gender pay gap.²

And traditionally women have often been overshadowed by men in the design area. Margaret MacDonald, the talented other half of Charles Rennie Mackintosh is a case in point. Mackintosh is known throughout the world as Scotland's most famous architect and designer, with Margaret Macdonald being portrayed in history as his supportive spouse. When she died, there was only brief mention of her in the press and subsequent writings on art history played down her significance. In fact, it seems her artistic contribution to his work was huge, a fact he acknowledged and is only now being recognised.³

All of this underlines the need for a special symposium for Women in Design.

I have looked at your colloquium program and note your theme for this year is "Collaboration" — with the rider, "Collaboration is accelerating within a society that previously focused on sole success."

This suggests and invites a clear trend towards working together, and uniting ideas.⁴ It's an excellent focus for the Women in Design 2016 Colloquium.

What also struck me in looking at your program is the refreshing and original manner in which sessions are being presented. They're quite unlike your standard conference or symposium.

Innovations such as "Floortalk" — "Late-night fireside presentations" — "Inspirational talks" — "Creative rapid fire presentations" — together with networking lunches on both days are bound to inspire and stimulate and guarantee the collaboration through which you'll see results.

² <http://architectureau.com/articles/the-state-of-gender-equality/>

³ Patricia Panther, 'Margaret MacDonald: the talented other half of Charles Rennie Macintosh' 10 January 2011,

http://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/arts/margaret_macdonald_the_talented_other_half_of_charles_rennie_mackintosh.shtml (accessed 22 July 2016).

⁴ <http://womenindesign.com.au/>

Dick and I are very much looking forward to hearing Keynote speaker Katrina Strickland's address later this evening and to the interview with Tasmanian designer, Lindsey Wherrett.

In conclusion, can I again congratulate Design Tasmania's Women in Design initiative. And I take this opportunity to wish Design Tasmania a happy 40th birthday.

Thank you