

TRANSCRIPT OF EVENT

INTERNATIONAL WOMENS DAY BREAKFAST 2023

Katherine Jones PSM (Host)

Secretary / ACT IPAA President
Department of the Attorney General's

Serena Williams (Acknowledgment of Country)

Ngunnawal Elder

Amanda Story (Vote of thanks)

Partner and Government leader
MinterEllison

Alison Frame (Panel member)

Secretary
Department of Veterans' Affairs

Dr Caroline Hughes (Panel member)

Executive Director
Collections Services Group

Sarah Collins (Panel member)

First Assistant Director-General
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Ngairé Crawford (Panel member)

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1 March 2023

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KATHERINE JONES:

Good morning, everyone. Thank you and welcome to the 2023 IPAA International Women's Day Breakfast. I feel like I should have this ebullient tone of celebration, but it's hard to get that when it's just a tick over 7:00 AM in the morning. But the buzz in the room is fantastic and it's wonderful to see you all here. So, thank you very much for joining us.

For those of you who don't know, I'm Katherine Jones, I'm the Secretary of the Attorney General's Department and the current president of IPAA ACT. IPAA's absolutely thrilled to be hosting this event today. Of course, it's not actually International Women's Day, that's on the 8th of March, but we wanted to take this opportunity to gather people from the IPAA community and have the opportunity to hear from some wonderful women who are going to talk to us about their experience. So it's a fantastic panel, which I'll come to shortly. And I will be soon introducing Serena Williams, who will do our welcome to country for us this morning. But I would like to, myself, acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet here today, the Ngunnawal people. Pay respects to their elders past and present and acknowledge their continuing connection to country.

So, this morning, as I said, we have a fantastic group of people joining us. Serena Williams, a Ngunnawal elder. Amanda Story, partner with MinterEllison. Dr. Caroline Hughes, executive director of the collection services group at AIATSIS. Alison Frame, the new secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs. Sarah Collins, the first assistant director-general portfolio and transformation at the Australian Signals Directorate. Ngarie Crawford, insight director at Insentia.

So thank you to all for accepting this invitation to be part of this and joining us for the conversation. Just want to acknowledge all the great colleagues and people who are in the room here today to join us. On that note, I'd like to introduce Serena Williams, a Ngunnawal elder. Auntie Serena is a proud Ngunnawal [inaudible 00:02:44] woman, a traditional custodian has lived in Canberra all her life. She's heavily involved in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and organisations in ACT and surrounding regions. Welcome to Serena.

SERENA WILLIAMS

Thank you, Katherine. Before I start, I'd like to make another acknowledgement because I'm not the only Ngunnawal elder here. I'd like to acknowledge my sister Caroline Hughes, who's another Ngunnawal elder here. Very proud to be standing here today to do a Welcome to Country Wise. We have another elder in the room, particularly a panel member. So yeah, Caroline. First thank you to IPAA for inviting me here to do welcome to country and respecting Ngunnawal protocols that's really important to us as the oldest living culture on the world, the most resistant culture in the world and our protocols still here. Our culture is alive and well and we still are here to that. And I thought I'd take the time just to, I'd like to put a bit of a cultural context into it before I actually do a welcome to country. And doing a welcome, the cultural context that I wanted to put in to celebrate International Women's Day is what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women face.

And I think you know, look at the intergenerational trauma, you look at the discrimination, the racism, and the poverty that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women face that leads a rocky pathway to go into the community, to the public, to the private sector. And I think they need to be looked at if we are looking at cracking the code. And I think we need to investigate that a bit deeper. I'd like to acknowledge all the beautiful women in here today celebrating something that's been gained since 1911, but I stand here and celebrate something that's been going on for more than over 40 to 50,000 years, my ancestors. And so I acknowledged all the strong blooded women in my bloodline and in all honourable bloodlines and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander bloodlines, that the reason that we are still here today continuing our culture.

I would like to say on behalf of all the Ngunnawal families, welcome to country. I say [foreign language 00:05:11], hello, come. I will sweep the lands for you to leave your footprints here on beautiful Ngunnawal country. [foreign language 00:05:18], the water of the Royal, the Murrumbidgee, the Molonglo, and the Gajumbi, that will cleanse you of all harm. [foreign language 00:05:25], [foreign language 00:05:26] is the totem of the Ngunnawal people. She's majestic, she will guide, protect, and oversee you on your journey here on Ngunnawal country. Happy International Women's Day, early International Women's Day. And good luck to the panellists, I look forward to the speaking. On behalf of all the Ngunnawal elders and families' groups here in Canberra, I'd like to welcome you here to beautiful Ngunnawal Woo country, thank you.

AMANDA STORY:

Thank you, Serena, for that generous welcome to Ngunnawal

land. And likewise, it is an absolute pleasure to see this room full today. I'm Amanda's Story from MinterEllison and we've been proud supporters of IPAA for several years now. And this event which is very close to my heart because it gives us all the opportunity to hear from wonderful women like those on the stage. So with that, I'm not going to sit between you and our speakers and breakfast. So pass over to Katherine to introduce today's panel members. Thank you.

KATHERINE JONES: Fantastic, thanks very much, Amanda. Okay, so I am going to introduce and just give a little bit of information because you've all got such fantastic experience and doing such amazing roles. So I just want to share a little bit of that with everyone here. So here to my left, Dr. Caroline Hughes, as I said from AIATSIS. A proud Ngunnawal woman, and an executive director of the collection services group. You've made significant contributions in the fields of education and community development over a career that spans 30 years?

CAROLINE HUGHES: Plus years.

KATHERINE JONES: 30 plus years. At AIATSIS, Caroline plays a leadership role ensuring that the institute is a responsible custodian of all items held in the unique and diverse AIATSIS collection, guiding the strategic management and long-term safekeeping of all the materials held in it. Welcome Caroline.

Alison Frame commenced the Secretary of Department of Veterans' Affairs in January 2023. Prior to that, she was the deputy Secretary for social policy in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. And this work included leading partnerships between the commonwealth, state and territory jurisdictions on delivering social policy and services outcomes for Australians. And prior to that, a rich career in New South Wales and Commonwealth Public Service.

Sarah Collins is heading up the portfolio and transformation division at ASD. Sarah commenced to her career with the public service in 1995 and has worked in a variety of positions primarily in national security operations, investigations, analysis and policy. In June 2022, Sarah was seconded to the Australian Signals director responsible for the portfolio and transformation area where she's leading ASDs \$10 billion Red Spar's programme, representing the largest transformation of the agency since its inception 75 years ago. Not much on your plate.

Ngarie Crawford from Isentia. She's the regional head for research at Isentia and Pulsar across Australia and New

Zealand. She also leads global product development for PR and communications across the access intelligence global research teams. She has more than 15 years in the field of communications and media research and with a particular focus on the role of representation and is a passionate advocate for research and that the right data can change the world. Please join me in welcoming all our panellists.

One of the key themes we wanted to draw out today was the importance of diversity and equity across the public sector. Throughout this morning's discussion, we'll be showcasing some snippets of some videos developed by IPAA ACT, that showcases diverse voices speaking about the topic of embracing equity and equality across the service and what that means for them and their organisations. I'd also like to just note that now we have a bill before the parliament, which is the Workplace Gender Equality Amendment, closing the gender pay gap bill, I love those long bill titles, but it's an important one. And pending its passage, this bill will require the Workplace Gender Equality Agency to publish gender pay gap information for organisations with a hundred and more employees.

And I can just speak from my own organisation now, we're looking at how we go through the process of publishing gender pay gap information because we really, I think the criticality of publishing and being held to account for it is absolutely critical. So I think these transparency measures play an increasingly important role. So with this in mind, I'd like to start the conversation and I'm going to direct this question to both Caroline and Ngarie. And just perhaps give us an example of, I'm calling it collective activism here, but activism for change within your organisation that particularly goes to the issue of diversity but broadly around driving change in your organisation. So Caroline, can I start with you?

CAROLINE HUGHES:

Yes, [foreign language 00:11:14]. And I too would like to acknowledge Serena and acknowledge you for your Welcome to country, to Ngannawal lands, Serena, thank you very much. I'm going to broaden it more than that. I've been at AIATSIS for 12 months and activism isn't something isolated to one organisation. For me, collective activism from a notable perspective and as a female, it has been an incredible but a very important experience myself, experienced biases against me based on my Aboriginality. And as a female where it was denied opportunities to go into roles and I was told by the HR manager at the time that I had made my choices on career. I had children, she chose not to, therefore she had a career.

That gave me the impetus to strive for more. And bringing together women, not necessarily like-minded women, but encouraging others by putting out the hand to encourage other journeys has been vital in all that I've done throughout my life and that includes where I am now.

So education has played a key role. The opportunity of community development. And seeing people where they have thought they could not achieve has been an incredible experience through education. So education is the salient ingredient in creating change across society. That key also creates the ripple effect for individuals and their families and the rest of the community. And I'm proud to see so many people, so many women in the room here today. But I must say it was also for me reaching out to others but others reaching out to me as well, where I had informal mentors both in the workplace and outside the workplace, developing those informal mentors were the ones that had said to me, "You can, and you will."

And they helped me to believe the little girl inside me that thought I could never achieve. And one of the things about collective activism is also understanding that many women in particular suffer from imposter syndrome and it's something that we need to deal with every single day. Even last night, and this morning I was like, what am I doing going in there to be a speaker, what a fool you are and who are you kidding on what can you speak about? But I've got to talk that down and you've got to reach that little girl inside me and say to her, "It's okay, we can do this." And not only say that to myself, I encourage all women to reach out to other young girls out there either in the workplace or even looking at colleges and high schools and be mentors, be the informal mentors and encourage others to speak up and be together.

KATHERINE JONES: Fantastic, couldn't agree more. Ngarie, what about you?

NAGARIE CRAWFORD: I think for me, collective activism starts a little bit with what you can influence. You can probably tell from my background that I speak in research terms. So the way that me and my team have built a connection to what we can change is by making sure that our public research programme connects to what my team care about. I am lucky enough to lead a research team that is predominantly women. Our client base is communicators that are also predominantly women. And it's important to us that what we contribute to from a media research and representation perspective links back to that. So the way that we help to drive change is by working with our

community partners to be able to shine a light on where it's still a little bit dark, which can be the media. So we do our public research about representation and how present women are, how diverse communities are represented across media.

So a couple of weeks ago we partnered with Women in Media and launched the Australian media gender school card, which my favourite is a bad term for the step, but the most striking statistic is actually that still 70% of spokespeople right across media are men. So there is still a reliance on male figures of authority across mainstream media in Australia. So that's sort of how we help drive some of these conversations forward is by providing that data and that evidence so that we can start conversations and hopefully change behaviour.

KATHERINE JONES: Fantastic, thank you. We're just going to show a short video now.

INTERVIEWER: What example of collective activism has driven change in your organisation?

DR. CHLOE LIM: Remote working imposed by COVID-19 pandemic changed the culture and mindset around flexible ways of working. Staff have proven that they can be productive with flexible working arrangements, helping with better work-life balance.

DR. AYRES: Two-thirds of the national library workforce and two-thirds of the executive team are women. The Australian library profession is dominated by women. We take collective action daily to improve access to information for all citizens. We work on policy service and infrastructure outcomes together to get better outcomes for Australians. And while gender might not be all this story, it's not nothing either.

DR. JOHNSON: I'm proud of what Geoscience Australia has achieved in making our workplace more inclusive. I recognise that enlightened organisations need to make space for collective activism because it can be such a key driver for change. In our workplace, we've put in place mechanisms that enable groups to come together and progress change. The best example of this is our accreditation as a breastfeeding friendly workplace. This came about because staff-led working groups and our formal committees came together to affirm our commitment to providing support for breastfeeding or expressing milk in the workplace. We listened to our staff, and we consulted with experts. And this resulted in improved flexibility to achieve our goals. I'm proud that Geoscience Australia is recognised as an accredited breastfeeding-friendly workplace. This helps parents bring their whole selves to work and I'm confident that

we never would've achieved such a great outcome without a collective and inclusive approach.

JANICE LAW:

In 1966, thanks to the efforts of women like Mel Thornton from the Department of Social Services, the marriage bar was removed, allowing married women to continue to work. Our careers are built on this activism. It provided us a future, provided us with access to superannuation and paved the way for other changes like maternity leave. I want to celebrate the activism that today allows me to be the most senior cybersecurity public officer in the APS, but also be a mother and a wife.

KATHERINE JONES:

Fantastic. Okay, Alison, I'm going to go to you next and just ask you what your view is about the biggest priority towards making progress towards gender equity?

ALISON FRAME:

Yeah, thanks Katherine. Just building on some of the comments that have been made earlier and Caroline spoke about someone saying to her, "You're a mum and that's different for you then." I think the focus for me and from my own experience is ensuring that men, it's typically men, but it could be any co-parent, are accessing all their entitlements so that women are free to engage with their career opportunities. So it's not just for me about focusing on women accessing all their entitlements, and I feel like I've had a lot of support with that through my career. But I can do what I am because I have, as Annabel Krab said, "We all need a wife." And my husband enables me to do this work because he looks after the kids and I'm away from home a few nights a week and he supports me to do that.

And we know there are times in our careers where we swap a bit, and one leans in and the other leans out and I think you really need that mutuality. But for me in my role then that's encouraging, that will be strongly encouraging co-parents to take their own leave entitlements so that moms are free to fully engage with their own workforce potential. And that will be something that I would be looking to strongly encourage. Also, very keen to ensure that there's pay equity for men and women doing identical roles. And I'm sure, I don't know if anyone else has experienced, but I have been in departments in New South Wales where for example, women at the same level as men in senior executive ranks not getting paid on average the same rates. And have also been in rooms where significant men have found that difficult to comprehend and just can't work out why that would be the case.

And it's always great to enlighten them about how that occurs. And I think they just need to be cognizant of that and we all need to be cognizant of that and actively look at that and make sure that we are doing everything we can to progress full pay equity. And that's why I think it's great you talked about the legislation that's there, Katherine, because in the house. And I think transparency is the key driver of that. And that is this has been able to continue because those rates of pay are not known. And it's just known to a few people at the top who think, "Oh, well that's okay. He asked me to start a few points up in the band and I thought that was fair." And so they know that, but other people don't know that and that's why those situations continue. So I think transparency is key.

KATHERINE JONES:

Fantastic. Thank you. Sarah.

SARAH COLLINS:

Look, I think I'm one of those people that draws a lot from my experience. And so when I think about what equity means, I think it really didn't hit me until I was probably five, 10 years into my career and it's really drawing a lot on what Caroline said. And I sat on a panel for one round, and I'm very, very focused on gender equity. But at the end of that round we had an entire male cohort. And I looked at it and I thought how we got to this point where I'm going to sign off on a panel, where the men, by virtue of their resumes and the works that they've done are performing at a level that means that they are far more competitive than the women, especially the women that started at the same time. And that's when I sort of started to look back and look at opportunity, and for me it's about opportunity. It's too late if we're getting into interview situations and promotion situations and realising that the women haven't been given the opportunity that the men have for a whole range of reasons.

And so that's been a real focus I think around looking at opportunities, especially for our very new starters and making sure that they feel empowered to ask for the opportunities that others might take for granted. And that includes things like overseas trips where they get to network with colleagues. Where we make it sometimes harder as Alison said for some women to take those opportunities because we don't plan enough. There's a lot of things that we can do even at very junior levels of management and with our peers to make their opportunities greater and enable that sort of situation that we got ourselves into all those years ago not to happen. And so that for me, it all sits around opportunity. And not just the opportunity that sits around structural initiatives, but the ones that we can sort of manage as individuals, by managing our

own teams and thinking about it right from the beginning because once we're getting to things like job interviews, it's too late to address some of those inherent issues that we must manage.

KATHERINE JONES: Great, thanks Sarah. I think we're going to go to another video now.

INTERVIEWER: What one thing still needs to be done to make progress towards gender equity?

DR. AYRES A core function of the national library is to build a national collection and we still find that when we approach women about their personal archives or about doing an oral history interview for us, they deprecate their role in Australian life. Very, very few men are surprised when we ask them about including their story in the national collection, lots of women are. So I think that Australian women need to step forward into that national imaginary and to see themselves as being part of the grand sweep of Australian history.

JANICE LAW: Services Australia is a diverse organisation that supports women, but there is a wide gap in FEMA participation between the APS five and six levels, where it's about 67% of women. At the EL levels there is only around 55% of women. We have a big pipeline and a sudden drop as we approach leadership levels, and this needs to be addressed.

DR JOHNSON: I think more work needs to be done to understand and respond to sexual harassment and sexism in the workplace, including the impact those attitudes can have on progressing gender equity. If we want people to perform at their best, they need to feel psychologically safe and comfortable at work. To achieve this, we need to stamp out sexual harassment and sexism at work. At Geoscience Australia, I participated in a series of listen and learn sessions facilitated by a psychologist, to hear about the real-life experiences of sexual harassment and sexism in my organisation. I found this experience to be very confronting but also fundamental to my understanding and addressing sexual harassment and sexism. From these sessions, I recognised we needed to make a conscious effort to ensure our staff understand and can respond to instances of sexual harassment. This was formalised with the creation of our first sexual harassment and sexism policy and procedures, confidential reporting and support hotline and mandatory E-learning for all staff. A key tenet was articulating a zero-tolerance approach. The listen and learn process was something I found very valuable, and I'd recommend it to

leaders across the APS.

DR. CHLOE LIM:

There is still a deep seeded belief of gender stereotypes about how women ought to think, speak and behave. We need to break this gender stereotypes by increasing our awareness of our own subconscious programming from past generations. It is bringing the unconscious into the conscious so we can change those unhelpful beliefs and thinking.

SAMANTHA S.:

When I think of gender equity, I have a vision of a world where every woman feels fulfilled and joyful, fulfilled both in our careers and work life and in our home life. And joyful, because if we can't laugh and have fun along the way, well, then what is it all for? I think one of the biggest things blocking that is the uneven distribution of domestic and caring duties in Australia. We know that women take on about 70% of that and the value of it is 650 billion, that's half of our GDP. So what can companies actually do about this? The first thing they can do is structure policies to support men taking on more of the caring and domestic responsibilities. And this is caring for children but also family, parents, we're all part of the sandwich generation now, so that no one's career suffers for taking part in home life.

The other thing companies can do is really listen to women and what it is that they want to help solve some of these problems. My own research shows that some of the things women want are part-time opportunities at senior levels, gender-neutral policies, and visible leadership on having a career and having responsibilities and interest outside of the workplace. What we know is that the workplace is changing, expectations for the workforce are changing and now is a time of great opportunity. The women who are here in this room today, you have a voice and I hope that you take it and use it to lead yourself towards a more fulfilled and joyful life.

KATHERINE JONES:

Great. I'm going to ask all of you a question, a couple of minutes each. The question I've been asked to ask is, are your organisations using technology to assist or support gender equity? And please speak to that. But also if you've got a thought about, based on some of the things that were said in that video, what else you would like to see your own organisations to do broadly around gender equity? I might start at the end there with Alison and come back this way.

ALISONE FRAME:

Okay, thanks Katherine. Well, lucky for me the going into DVA, they've got really good working from home systems that the previous secretary insured were in place during COVID, so that supported a lot of work and processing all those claims

from home. So all that work continued well throughout COVID and that's obviously created a lot of flexibility around part-time work, hybrid work models and that is really valued by staff, it became very clear to me early on that that is something that is highly valued. So that's great that the technology's there to support it. But I think the challenge in applying it is exactly what one of the speakers spoke about there that I don't want to see that technology freeing women up to do more housework or carry more of that load at home because they're supported to work from home, and 67% of the workforce in DVA are women. You just don't want it to perpetuate a pattern that's not actually providing women those full opportunities. And that's difficult. I mean that's not for us to be in people's homes, they work out those balances for themselves.

But for us, again, it goes to my early answer, it's just about wanting to be a department that provides those opportunities to everyone, actively contemplates women being prepared for future opportunities as well, as you say, you must plan for that. I remember Anne Summers saying years ago, I was at a lunch or something. And she said the head of Coca-Cola had said to her, "Just wait, you see who comes through on merit and they get the rolls on the basis of merit at that point in time." And she said to them, "Well, do you plan what's going to come through in your factory in the bottles of Coke, filling all the bottles of Coke? Do you have present numbers about how many can come through on the conveyor belt and all of the planning you do about your manufacturing and production?" She said, "It's the same for women being given these opportunities. Why do you think that it just all happens naturally? You must actively lean in." So I think it's just about that balance, making sure that that technology is accompanied by all these other measures to ensure that there's full opportunity for engagement for everyone.

KATHERINE JONES: Thanks Alison. And one thing I'll ask the rest of you to draw out was something that we've been grappling with in my organisation as we are driving to support more flexible work arrangements, greater opportunities for hybrid. Is there a agenda lens to that though? That issue about whether being seen in the right way in meetings and other things, how do we have to think about that when we're working in a hybrid environment? Ngarie, I go to you.

NGARIE CRAWFORD: I think from a technology perspective, I mean, I deal in media and communications technology primarily. And I think one of the things that is important, and I want to pick up on in one of the videos that Lynn some when talked about women stepping

forward. And I think in a future focused way, one of the things I'm conscious of is using good data to be able to shine a light on online spaces. I think there is a huge amount of work that needs to happen around how women feel empowered to step forward as leaders, how women feel empowered to step forward and be representative when there's all these amazing kinds of public structures and structures within companies that support women. And then there is still this large element of audience conversation and social media discussion and potential social media backlash around how women show up for work and what the characteristics of a good leader are. That can really impact how women see themselves in the future and what roles they see themselves having.

So for me, I always equate technology with the availability of data. So to me that's an area that's important to be explored more and called out and shine the light in the dark corners on that in that respect. And I think it is linked to that idea of hybrid working a little bit because it's an area where people can be spending more time. It's an area where people can be sourcing more information and as connections become more digital and more through a screen, I think it's important to consider the impact of some of those narratives on how people turn up as a whole person and as a whole woman in these circumstances.

KATHERINE JONES:

Fantastic.

SARAH COLLINS

I guess I'd just flag that hybrid working arrangements and working for home isn't something that features a lot in the national security space. So I'm not really one to lead on that aspect, Katherine, so I might leave that for the experts. But I will say that technology and certainly within ASD, this won't shock any of you that may have worked with ASD, they're a very technology driven organisation as they must be. And data does play such a central role in so much of the decision making. Our discussions around gender and gender representation through all the levels of ASD's management and through our junior ranks is all chartered against numbers and figures. And in that sense, it's a positive story around the same number of women, not a majority, but the same number of women being at the APS one to six level, being at the EL level, and being at the senior executive level. And a conscious focus on making sure that we continue that while we increase that pool from which to draw from for the future.

So that's a fabulous place to work in and I'm just new there, so it's exciting on technology. And I have a good news story from that perspective. I didn't think I'd ever be here talking about

Tinder, but here I am. ASD has partnered with the Australian Women Insecurity Network. Sorry, it's a mouthful sometimes. And OK RDY, an Australian startup, to create an app that enables people to be matched for mentoring in the security environment, using AI to sit underneath that to match people, not just by what they want to achieve, although that is a large part of it, but things like values and experience and a whole range of other things. And I think that's remarkable. It's not something that we would've seen 10 years ago, very much driven from the community and the network. But using technology to deliver an outcome that and an outcome that is driven by values, which is so important when trying to look forward to how we work in this space. So ASD has a good new story in that respect. So it's an exciting time to be working in an agency like that.

KATHERINE JONES: Fantastic. Learned something new this morning, that's great.

CAROLING HUGHES: Caroline. How do I top that? Like, oh my gosh, that's fantastic, that's brilliant. Especially when we consider the formal and informal mentoring opportunities, therefore for women. Thank you COVID for the technology advancement and the opportunity for people to work from home. And we've more moved towards a hybrid arrangement as well across the board, not based on a woman having to care for her children, but based on employees, what works for them. Some employees, including females, prefer to come into the work full-time, not because of the nature of their role, because we're very open to the arrangements with the technology being available to work from home.

So we've got a good spread across our agency in the number of men and women that like the hybrid approach, one or two days at home. However, I must say that with AIATSIS, when we'd look at pay equity for an Aboriginal organisation, we are the second lowest paid of the Australian public service. And that is, when you think about that, that is an Aboriginal inequity that is happening in the Australian public service, and that is impacting Aboriginal people and non-indigenous people working in that organisation. And that shocked me coming from the ACT public service where that that's just not heard of. That one director would be paid less than the other for similar work. And when I won my position as an executive director and I was offered my pay, I laughed at them. And I said, "Why would I leave a job that I love to go there with more responsibility? No way."

And I think it's really important that females feel empowered to

challenge what they're offered, because I take on board that and I know that in the past it's something that has impacted me in the past where I was the director at CIT, but I wasn't paid the same as the other directors at CIT. Lots of excuses why, but obviously my Aboriginality played a part in that. So I put forward a bold approach. My son who worked in HR said, "You'll never get that." And that included 20% superannuation. I got it. And because I believed in myself, and other people were shocked that I got it. And I really encourage women because no doesn't kill you, won't drop dead from a no. It's a negotiation, so go with it. And technology I think has helped us as women understand what is available out there and what we can ask for. And ask for it, go for it, do it because I got it and now, I might be able to retire a little bit earlier.

KATHERINE JONES: Well, only if you want to, but we hope you don't.

CAROLINE HUGHES: Yes. That won't be next week or next year.

KATHERINE JONES: What a fantastic story. I mean, challenging that it's still something that must be done these days. But I think that inspiration for being prepared to make that request and insist on your worth is fantastic.

CAROLINE HUGHES: I do have to say, though it's difficult being in that executive role and knowing how low other the staff are in the organisation, the inequity of their pay, it's mind-boggling.

KATHERINE JONES: So this is the opportunity for people in the audience to mine the wisdom of these fantastic voices that we got up here on the podium. So I'm just going to invite people. I can see someone over there to the left who's got their hand up and then also in the back of the room. So if you can just stand up and introduce yourself. Thank you.

MELISSA COADE: Hi panel. Hello. Hello panel. Melissa Coade from the Mandarin. I want to try and tie a few of your comments together to put this question to you collectively. I know so many fantastic single EL1 and EL2 public servants who by virtue I think of their single status probably do the job of more than one person. They don't have wives or husbands to help with the workload at home. And they struggled to make the case to their bosses that the business case of the self-advocacy, which our last panellists just sort of talked about in terms of pay negotiation. So how do those highly motivated, competent people really doing heavy lifting? Better self-advocate both to overcome structural barriers in government agencies and within their immediate teams?

KATHERINE JONES: Thank you, I'll invite maybe one or two of you to address that.

SARAH COLLINS: Look, I guess I'm happy to talk about that. I think from my perspective and having been in a similar situation, it largely goes back to the data and having a calm and considered discussion that outlines what you deliver, not necessarily in terms of every other person, but in terms of the benefits that are attributable to that. I've never found that anyone seeks to hold people back, it's inadvertent and it's usually from my experience in the public service, a lack of experience, knowledge or awareness as opposed to an intent.

And I think that having those discussions, and it's goes to the transparency comment, it goes to the communication piece that we need to do, but having that conversation opens people's eyes up. I think it goes back to a comment I had with a very senior executive once who said, "I don't see gender, Sarah." And my comment was, "But you don't see gender, so you don't see the issues that are facing this organisation at this particular point and the fact that three quarters of your executive are male." Because he genuinely didn't see gender and didn't see the impact it had in that particular situation. I like to think that while he disagreed with me vehemently and an argument ensued, that after that he may have gone away and thought about that and that may have left us in a better position. So I think communication's central and sometimes you must just tackle it head on.

ALISON FRAME: Can I add to that, Katherine? I would just say as well, I think if someone's going hard like that and really pushing hard, it would be good for them to point out directly to their manager exactly what they're doing, what is additional? Looking for those stretch tasks, which they're probably doing by the sounds of it. And really making that clear to the manager, I'm doing all these additional tasks, I'm seeking these stretch tasks, I'm taking them on, I'm delivering against them. And that what puts you in the good position for bargaining and going forward. And that's not just your immediate remuneration, but your career path from that point on as well, you should be having that longer term conversation, where is this going to take me? What are the opportunities for me? I'm happy to do this, but this is what I'm looking for in return.

KATHERINE JONES: Great. I think there was a question there in the middle table.

LAUREN: Hi, I'm Lauren from the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water. I have a question. So based on the latest UN statistics that were released a week

ago, globally we're about 300 years away from gender equality. So I have a question around why is it taken this long for this to happen? Why are we as a government not being more ambitious, and how can us women work together to advocate fiercely and stronger? Because 300 years away from gender equality, I think we should probably be doing more.

KATHERINE JONES: Well, there's a call to arms. Who wants answer that?

NGARIE CRAWFORD I could probably dump him because we're talking about research, which is my favourite thing. I think the fact that you've called out that stat is incredibly important. That's what I love about, and again, loving it is not necessarily the right term, but the fact that that's an undeniable stat. So that is the call to action, that is the value of it and that is the power of it. And it's being able to continue to build on that and find those pockets of information where you can shine a light on it and drive that change. So I again have just ended up advocating for research.

KATHERINE JONES: There's a couple of questions down there, but two hands are up there and then I can see you there. So we'll go there first.

TINA: Tina Blute from the Department of Social Services. Panel, thank you for sharing your views and wonderful experiences. And one thing I suppose a take is, we're probably all acknowledging it's not just one solution, there's a whole heap of them. But what I would like to put to the panel is how do we challenge the merit principle to see it different? So Sarah talked about a story where you were on a panel and the ELs and it was all the men that came to the top. But I would like to put to the panel, I think we don't see the merit principle in the way that we should. And I'll give you an example of how do we recognise the contribution that women are making when they choose to stay at home for caring and responsibilities and take time out on their formal career for want a better description. The definition of problem solving, who in this room has not had to deal with lots of problems when they're at home or multitasking or whatever. I remember back in the mid-2000s when I was recruiting an EA, and I picked a woman who was a mum, full-time, and did party planning at night-time. Fabulous organisation of skills, all that sorts of things under [inaudible 00:45:35] EA. But that's my question to the panel and I'd like to challenge everyone to look at the merit principle very differently. Thanks.

KATHERINE JONES: Thanks Tina. Who wants to have a go at it, Caroline?

CAROLINE HUGHES Well, from my perspective, I've always seen the merit selection

process from a cultural perspective as well as from a female perspective. Understanding I think as a mother myself; mothers have wonderful organisational skills and I have an EA as well that is a mom of two children and has a bub on the way. And I've always supported women in the workforce, I didn't need policies that told me that women could come into work and breastfeed. I've always made that opportunity, and it's great, it's fantastic, have the policies but also look at the spaces in between. And for us as Aboriginal people, affirmative action roles are vital to help lift Aboriginal people and of course as First Nations women.

But one of the things that people in their goodwill try to do for Aboriginal people is lift people up before they're ready as well. So we need to understand that as and ensure that there are practises in place that people are getting the opportunity to gain skills. And as I said earlier, education is a salient ingredient. And education can be formal and informal. So placing the cultural lens is vital and understanding that people bringing many skills sets to a job, not necessarily what's written in the job description.

The other thing that I want to address is that the subject of identity. When we Aboriginal First Nations people are applying for affirmative action jobs, it needs to go to people who have lived experience as Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander people. Accepting statutory declarations would be accepting a stat deck instead of a birth certificate or a passport here in Australia. So I'm asking that people don't do wrong by First Nations people by accepting statutory decks because there are three criteria that a confirmation of Aboriginality is accepted in the community and that's a genuine qualification for Aboriginal people.

So I think for women also in particular looking at opportunities to stretch and act in roles, but also making sure that they're not acting in a role forever, that there is the opportunity for ongoing engagement, and having career plans in place, encouraged them to have a career plan. One of the things that HR director that told me that I couldn't have a career as a female, she then sat with me and said, "All right, we're going to do a career plan for you. You seem determined." And it was like I angered her by being determined. And she said, "All right, well, where do you want to be in five years?" I said, "I'm going to be doing your job." And she said to me, "You like a bulldog with a bone, you won't let go." I said, "No, I won't, I'm going to take that as a compliment, and I'll be in your job." I was in that woman's job in two years. So keep talking to your little girl inside you, stamp

down that imposter syndrome. And you go for it because if you don't tell yourself to do it, nobody else may either. So keep saying to yourself, you can do it.

ALISON FRAME: Let add to that one, Katherine.

KATHERINE JONES: Yeah, yeah, go ahead.

ALISON FRAME: To that one about merit. A good friend of mine talks about the myth of merit all the time. I think it's important to interrogate who is defining what is meritocratic here and ask yourself that question. And you think about pre-selection in political parties, for some. I'm sure the people who are attributing merit are predominantly men, age over 65 or whatever, who would be these preselectors. And that's not a bad thing, but that they are the ones defining merit in those circumstances. I think you need to ask yourself a question, who is, it's not an objective notion, obviously it's based on the people who are saying, oh, this is a decision based on merit. So I think recognising that we need to look at where we can question what is meritocratic here? So you find yourselves on panels and other places where you can challenge and say, well, what do you think is merit based here? Let and push out with that, we're all in positions where we can really assert that power and recognise and question what we're defining as merit.

KATHERINE JONES: Fantastic, thank you. Go to that next question then.

MARIANNE: Marianne Broadbent, from NGS Global, we're an executive search and leadership advisory company. And I'd endorse a lot of the comments that the panel has made as someone who interviews people regularly, particularly women with imposter syndrome. I had it this week, explaining to a woman, "No, you do actually have the qualifications we are looking for." I have never ever had a man say, I'm not qualified for that role when I've rung them, it happens about at least 50% of the time I speak to women. I was going to endorse Caroline's comments in two ways. One is, yes, please don't hesitate to seek a higher salary. 20 years ago, it works in all domains, public sector, education, private sector. 20 years ago I was working in Gartner, felt I was underpaid, knew I was underpaid, got my data together, made a case to my boss. I reported to a boss, he reported to the president. Got nowhere with him. In the end, went around him, which probably wasn't a good thing to do in some ways, but I got a 30% pay rise based on the evidence that I presented.

So always if you got data, use it is my advice. But the question I wanted to ask is often in selection of candidates, we are told

we want someone who's different, we want a broader candidate pool, and search firms will often deliver that. And then sometimes a person is appointed who does have some different attributes, might perhaps not be quite ready. And there's one thing to have a diverse policy, I think there's another to have a good inclusion approach. So my question to the panel is to what extent have you seen or in your organisations have you been able to assist people who've been appointed, who have other kinds of merit, whatever it is. And I totally agree with Alison's comment about merit and what is merit. But how do you support people for whom a role might be a stretch?

KATHERINE JONES: Thanks. Ngarie, do you want to have a cracker then?

NGARIE CRAWFORD Sure. So I think for me, obviously I have private sector background and experience. I think for us the idea of mirror turns into a language around behaviours. And so for us it's always what we are looking for is if people have the capacity to learn and exhibit the right behaviours. But career pathways, especially for women, especially in things that are dominated by data and technology and research, can get quite complex. I think that one of the ways that we found really successful is within our organisation to set up spaces for women to talk about careers, spaces to find great mentors, somewhere to start having open and transparent conversations that aren't with a line manager, and might not be with your specific department, but finding other women that are in leadership around the organisation that can contribute to that learning through their own experience and their own careers. And we've found that to be effective with particularly young women, to find the inspiration of the type of career that they might want within our organisation. And understanding the challenges that they might face and what objections they might come across and how that's been navigated in the past and just starting to build that community within our organisation I think has been really, effective.

KATHERINE JONES: Fantastic. I'm going to incur a programme of my colleagues at IPAA and ask and allow one more question to be asked. I saw there was someone here, so go for it. Last question.

DONNA: Good morning, my name is Donna and I'm in the fortunate position to have my department, the attorney general's department pay a full-pay scholarship for me to undertake gender equality through PhD at ANU the next three years. So this panel has been interesting and the discussions that have jumped out to me this morning have been comments around

the double shift that women largely take on, that is work and care. And we all know that women can't have it all if they are doing it all, and women are doing it all. To that end, we've seen many workplace initiatives including government policies focus on getting women into work and getting women into leadership. So my question to the panel is what can workplaces do to get men out of work and into the home so they can relieve women of the double shift?

KATHERINE JONES: Who wants to have a go at that one?

CAROLINE HUGHES: I know for me, my husband, an electrician, and getting his mind to shift in understanding because he grew up in a world where he'd get up in the morning, go to the bathroom, go back to his room and his mother made the bed and put his work clothes out. And then he'd go out and have his cooked breakfast in front of him and then he'd pick up his packed lunch and go to work, and then he met me. And so now he cooks, he's clean, he helps empower me. And we've raised children to have that expectation as well. So I think it goes back to help people raise boys and understanding. And I think the world has evolved a lot too to what it used to be and doesn't mean that there's a lot more continual improvement that needs to happen. But I do know that his parents were completely shocked when he got up and washed up when we were visiting them. And I think the opportunity for men to be at home caring for their children, even caring for a parent is an opportunity that workplaces need to encourage and support as well.

KATHERINE JONES: Fantastic. I'm going to have to close here at this moment, but it's been fantastic presentation. Really appreciate your frankness, your advice and your inspiration to all of us. So on behalf of everyone, can I thank all members of the panel.

And if I can speak as one sort of recovering and sometimes lapsing sufferer of imposter syndrome myself, I think Caroline's exhalations I really take to heart and I hope you all take to heart that you just got to try and call it out in yourself and overcome it, it was fantastic and thanks for sharing that. Couple of things before we finish up that I just want to mention to you all, we've got a few IPAA events coming up, which will be fantastic. And I encourage you all to think about them, the first is the public-private partnerships for our net-zero nature positive future to be delivered on 18th of April. And that's an event in partnership with IPAA's ACT partner, Commonwealth Bank. And we'll have a speaker from the World Economic Forum who's visiting in April. So please think about that. We've got the wonderful Spirit of Service awards; the nominations

have opened for those awards.

Firstly, it's brilliant to have the opportunity to recognise a whole range of contributions from across the service. So I encourage you to think about people in your own organisations or people that you see working across the service and give the important opportunity to recognise their work. And if you can come along to the event that we hold to celebrate it, it's a fantastic night. And the Australian Government Graduate Data Forum and APS data reward ceremony is going to be delivered on the 17th of May. So please support that. It's fantastic work with the graduate teams. So if I can just finish off by thanking our fantastic partners, KPMG, Hayes, Telstra, MinterEllison, Commonwealth Bank of Australia, and Microsoft. I want to thank you all, I want to thank the fabulous IPAA team who've pulled this event together and thanks very much for joining us. Cheers.