



TRANSCRIPT OF EVENT

2025 International Women's Day breakfast & Helen Williams Oration

Honourable Ms Sam Mostyn AC

Governor-General of Australia

Michelle Steele

Chief First Nations Officer
Paul Ramsay Foundation

Genevieve Jacobs AM

CEO
Hands Across Canberra

Katherine Jones PSM FIPAA

IPAA ACT President and Board Member
Secretary
Attorney-General's Department

Carolina Dorma

Partner, Canberra
MinterEllison

Selina Walker

Emerging Ngunnawal Elder

DATE: 5 March 2025

Enquiries should be directed to Kate Driver on 0413 008 873 or at Kate.driver@act.ipaa.org.au

KATHERINE JONES PSM FIPAA:

Thanks for joining us here today on this fantastic morning in Canberra for this fantastic event. I'm Katherine Jones, I'm the President of IPAA ACT and the Secretary of the Attorney-General's Department.

It's my pleasure this morning to introduce you to our Welcome to Country speaker, Ngunnawal elder, Selina Walker. Selina is a proud Ngunnawal woman and is the very proud granddaughter of Aunty Agnes Shea. Selina has a strong commitment to family and work within our region. She's been working in the ACT Aboriginal community and surrounding regions for over 12 years in various roles across the ACT human services sectors, especially in the child and youth protection areas, homelessness, mental health, and women's service system. Please welcome Selina.

SELINA WALKER:

Thank you. Hello, my name is Selina Walker and this is Ngunnawal Country. I just want to first start by acknowledging my elders, the Ngunnawal elders, and pay respect to my elder's past, present, and future. I'd also like to acknowledge the recent passing of my grandmother, Aunty Agnes Shea, who was the most senior Ngunnawal elder here. She was a little old Black woman, but she'd get around so I'm sure many of you crossed paths. If you did, you're one of the lucky ones. I'd also like to acknowledge any other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that are with us here this morning. Welcome, my brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles and I'd like to extend that to all our non-Indigenous friends that have joined us. Welcome.

The Ngunnawal community are the traditional custodians of Canberra and the region. You may not be aware that the Ngunnawal nation is made up of several family groups and not just individuals who represent this country. Therefore, as a community we have an elected body, known as the United Ngunnawal Elders Council, to represent us, along with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elected body of the ACT. This is important for you to understand and acknowledge, for our identity is a collective identity. There are other Indigenous and non-Indigenous people from around the nation, the country, and the world who have come to live on Ngunnawal land, I'd like to acknowledge and welcome you all.

The tradition of welcoming the people to country is a practise that was handed down by our ancestors, old people and elders from the beginning of time. Before entering another person's country, you would first announce your arrival and not answer until a Traditional Owner formally welcomed you. The reason for this practise was to protect your spirit whilst in another

person's country and to show respect for the country which you were entering. It's wonderful to see this practise is now recognised and respected. I suppose it's not like entering someone's home unless you're first invited.

The Ngunnawal people, as within all Aboriginal people, have a great heritage that we would like to share with all Australians from every walk of life. As you are aware, Canberra means meeting place, and Canberra has been a place of gathering for many Aboriginal tribes of Australia to come together to deal with important business and for ceremonial purposes. Our ancestors believed in the importance of people gathering to build relationships, share knowledge, and to celebrate the gift of heritage and history. We believe it's important for all to recognise our unique history and to gain an understanding that our land is our heritage, and how loss of the land had disconnected so many Aboriginal people from their spiritual links, cultural heritage and identity.

Reconciliation is not just a word, it is an action, and it's a human rights movement. As an Aboriginal person in this country, I've only been counted as a human being for 58 years. Let me repeat this while this sinks in. I, as a beautiful Black woman in Australia, have only been counted as a human being for 58 years. I'm only 44. We're very young in our reconciliation journey here in Australia, but we're on the right path. By incorporating proper cultural protocols, like Welcome to Country, acknowledgement of country, smoking ceremonies, et cetera, we are on the road to true reconciliation. It does still hurt me though that my dad was born a tree, that my grandmother was a mother in this country before she was a human being. So, I ask you all to take a moment and think about how old you are, how old your elders are, and how old your children are, and what you're doing to contribute to that reconciliation, human rights movement.

The referendum that happened a few years ago was another huge milestone in our reconciliation journey. Not the result that we wanted, but it did bring a lot of truth-telling. Helped us to identify where we must focus our efforts and what states need the most amount of help. I'm so proud to be a Canberran. I'm proud of my fellow Canberrans for the yes vote here in the ACT. Still a lot of work to be done, but it's a demonstration that the work that my grandmother, and many other elders, have done towards reconciliation, can influence that change that we all want. Remember that that vote was not a vote for me to be Aboriginal, it was not a vote for me to be a Traditional Owner, it was a vote to edit a document. And that's what Australia said no to. So, we'll

recalibrate, we'll reassess, we'll find another way forward to continue to fight for First Nations justice that's going to work for all Australians.

I stand on the shoulders of giants and I want to honour those giants. It is a shared history, so there must be shared accountability. If we continue to live in shame here in Australia, we are never going to progress forward. I don't want my boys to be standing up here in 20, 30 years' time fighting and advocating for the same things that I am today, that my grandmother's done for the past 60 years, my ancestors for the past 200 years. That change happens with us. So, I encourage you all to continue to have those conversations, have those awkward discussions where learning and understanding, which is what true reconciliation is, lies. It lies in a simple yarn.

So, thank you for inviting me here to the Welcome to Country. Unfortunately, I can't stay for the rest of the event. I do have kin care of nine teenagers. I didn't stutter, I said nine, hence the grey hair at 44. And we all know what teenagers are like at this time of the morning for school, so I do have to dash off. But well done to the organisers for incorporating this very important cultural protocol. Well done for you for getting out of bed on this very cold morning. I know I struggled, but that sun makes it worth it. So, in the words of my people, [Ngunnawal language], which means you may leave footprints on our land now, or in other words, Welcome to Country. Thank you very much.

GENEVIEVE JACOBS AM:

Good morning. Welcome to IPAA's International Women's Day Breakfast. I think my sister Selena has perhaps ducked out the door now, but I always feel such pride in seeing her leadership in action as we reflect on today's theme. It's Time to Turn Promises into Progress: March Forward. It is a real honour to be with you as your event host, as we come together to celebrate a day dedicated to recognising the achievements, the resilience, and the contributions of women across the world.

In my role as the CEO of Hands Across Canberra, the ACT's community foundation, I work with many women who put their hearts and souls into building a better community for all. A place where we can be stronger, more inclusive, more celebratory of this kind, generous, beautiful city of ours, where we build a better Canberra together. And for so many of you in this room, that's your everyday life too, working to make this and other Australian communities better and fairer places.

So, I want to begin by thanking you professionally and personally for being who you are and doing what you

do. And could you just give yourselves a round of applause? You're a wonderful room full of women.

But as well as the important celebration of International Women's Day, today's event also celebrates the Helen Williams Oration. IPAA ACT was established in 1953 as a professional body focused on the promotion of excellence and professionalism in public administration. Each branch of IPAA hosts an annual oration to honour those who have made significant contribution to public administration in Australia and the annual IPAA ACT oration is held in recognition of Helen Williams AC.

Now Helen's known to many across the public service, perhaps notably, as the first woman in the Australian public service to be appointed the secretary of an Australian government department. She was also the Australian Public Service Commissioner between her time as Secretary of Immigration and Communication. Helen retired from the public service in 2009 but remains passionate about public administration and those who work in this great profession. She was a trailblazer for so many of us. So IPAA ACT was very pleased that Helen accepted the proposal to host the inaugural Helen Williams Oration in 2018.

And I'd now like to introduce our orator today, the Honourable Ms. Sam Mostyn AC, who was sworn in as Australia's 28th Governor-General on July 1 last year. A businesswoman and a community leader, Ms. Mostyn's known for her exceptional service to the Australian community. She has a long history in executive and governance roles across diverse sectors, including business, sport, climate change, the arts, policy and not-for-profit. In 2024, Ms. Mostyn was made a Companion of the Order of Australia for eminent service in social justice, gender equity, sporting, cultural and business sectors, to reconciliation and to environmental sustainability. And she'd previously been appointed an Officer of the Order in 2021. For her continued contribution as an advocate for gender inclusion and equity, sustainability and climate change action, Ms. Mostyn was awarded the 2020 United Nations Day Honour Award, and an honorary Doctor of Laws from the Australian National University in 2018.

Most recently she's chaired the boards of Aware Super, Centre for Policy Development, Beyond Blue, Australians Investing in Women, Foundation for Young Australians, the Women's Economic Equality Taskforce, the Australian National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, ANROWS, and the Climate Council. And she's also served on the boards of some of Australia's leading companies, including Mirvac, City Australia, Transurban, and Virgin Australia. Please join me in welcoming one of our own, the Governor-General of Australia, the Honourable Sam Mostyn AC.

HONOURABLE MS SAM MOSTYN AC: Good morning, everybody. It's a glorious, glorious morning. That sun is just wonderful to come into this room. I love coming here. Of course, I want to start by acknowledging the Ngunnawal people, the Traditional Owners of this beautiful country that we meet on this morning, and I want to thank Selina always for her call to action. She never misses an opportunity to remind us of the work to be done. She also reminds us of the role of women and kin carers, and she's a young woman who has been taking on those eldership duties for several years. And I'm always very, very impressed to see Selina. And I'm sure she's always happy to see so many First Nations women in a room like this, who I'd also like to acknowledge this morning.

Katherine and Kate, the driving force of IPPA, thank you for inviting me to speak this morning. It's a wonderful way for me to start International Women's Day Week. For many in the room, there are many events this week and over the coming days. And I'm really pleased to be here because to be at a place that, as you say on your posters, builds connections and challenges thinking, and all-around public administration, it's a really important time for us to be here, and I was delighted that this is the first address I'll give this week. And it is about those that are involved in public administration and the collaboration with those in different sectors right across the country.

Genevieve, our second time seeing each other this week. We were at an Iftar dinner in Ginninderry on Sunday night, where I was hearing more about the work you've done at the community level, and whether it's public administration or community work, I think that's what we're here to celebrate today. The role of women but not only women. There are many men in the audience and I want to acknowledge the men who are here today who support the notions and processes behind a week like this and believe that it's time to march forward and to turn all those promises into progress.

I also want to acknowledge table 14, because that's the Government House team, and increasingly I'm wanting the team at Government House to be part of events like this. I also note, it's a quirk of history this year, that for the first time I will be having three women aide-de-camps. So, my three aides-de-camps, Jamie is here today. Where are you Jamie? Jamie's here from Air Force. I now have three extraordinary young women that represent the three arms of defence as my aides and it's a wonderful changing group of women and men who join me in that role, as it is with the women who are, and the men sitting at table 14. So, I just wanted to welcome them as well.

So, first, it is my first International Women's Day as your governor-general, so I want to wish everyone a very happy and successful International Women's Day and Week. I like doing that here particularly because, as Genevieve hinted at, I'm the first Canberra-born governor-general. It's nice to be with Canberrans on a morning where we're celebrating this as someone who was born not far from here in the old Royal Canberra Hospital, now the National Museum, and to know that a lot of your experiences of Canberra are like the ones that I had. Whether you were born here or have come here, I do feel like I've come home, and it's nice to be in the ACT fulfilling this role for a lot of my time.

I'm also only the second woman to serve in this role, as so many of you would already know, and I want to acknowledge the ground-breaking first woman in this role, Dame Quentin Bryce. I owe her, I think we all do, a debt of gratitude for her pioneering and compassionate leadership. And unsurprisingly, she was exceptional and an exceptional person, woman supporter and generous to me in supporting me before I took this office. So, in that time before I was sworn in, but I'd been announced, I did go and meet all the former governors-general around the country and started here in Canberra with Sir William Deane and then saw all the others, but particularly Dame Quentin. Ever since taking on my role, Dame Quentin has been enormously supportive, because as you all know she invested her energy, intellect, her joie de vivre in the women's movement over many years before she was governor of Queensland and then as governor-general of this country. And I want to pay my deepest respect and honour to the first woman to serve in this office.

I know last year she came back to Canberra for the unveiling of a statue of the late Susan Ryan. I know how special that was for her. She brought friends with her, including another pioneer, Wendy McCarthy, who'd be known to many of you, and it was wonderful to see Dame Quentin and Wendy and all her women friends at that statue of Susan Ryan, celebrating decades and decades of the women's movement.

And in saying all that, of course, I'm here delivering the Helen Williams Oration, so I want to pay a special tribute to the remarkable Helen Williams AC. I'm so pleased that there is an oration named in her honour and it's a real privilege to be presenting in her name today. 40 years ago this year, Helen became the first woman to lead a federal government department, as you heard from Genevieve, as secretary of the Department of Education.

Now in 1994, I was fortunate, as a young policy advisor here in Canberra, I worked for two federal ministers at the time before working for the then prime minister, Paul Keating. During that time, as a young person engaged in policy, not so much politics but absolutely policy, I was one of those that were able to benefit from her leadership because then she was a secretary of the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts. And I got to know Helen as one of those brave bureaucrats who supported the minister, supported us, but was always fearless in her advice to the office about the best policy decisions that could be taken at the time.

Now many women have followed her into public service leadership and many, many of them, many of you are here today. But as 2024 orator for this lecture, Padma Raman noted it took 17 years before the second woman secretary was appointed. It's a long time to be the first and only, in Helen's case, and it reminds us that change sometimes does take a very long time.

But today I think it is still the case that almost 50% of all secretaries of the Commonwealth departments are women. Half the current cabinet are women, half the shadow cabinet are women. And so sometimes, for those of us who have sat patiently by ourselves as the first, I did that at the AFL Commission in 2005 as the first woman to serve on a football board of that stature in Australia, sometimes you just wait for that moment when the second, third, fourth, fifth woman arrive and you know that it's been worth the wait because change does take time and it's why the march on theme for this year means so much to many of us.

Last year, the Office for Women, and many of you would be interacting with that office, which Padma leads, celebrated its 50th birthday. And in 2025, somewhat sad to say, it still has an agenda as full as ever. Still much to do, but with a great deal of excitement, determination, and amazing results in recent years that give us all great hope.

Everyone in public policy knows this now, I hope everyone in this room knows this, the gender equality lens is now an essential tool of policymaking. And we saw that again this week with the release of the gender pay gap data, released by Mary Wooldridge. It reminded us that we are making strides. There's not a huge change in those numbers, but the fact they're being reported by companies, there's transparency in that process, and that commentary, about the need for women to be paid the same as men for the same work, is something we now talk about as a natural part of not just this week, but of all of the work that has gone to ensure equality.

Now, I know that many of you, like me, like Padma, like Helen Williams, like Dame Quentin, we've all been marking International Women's Days for years and now for me decades of my adult life. The lovely thing I think is we all get to catch up with each other at these events. There's a lot of networking that goes on, but a lot of friendship. But we all know that the work of equality is slow, diligent, lifelong work. It requires courage, determination and persistence. It's got to work in a world where all of us believe and can imagine that change is possible, and that we can work to that world and say something to a future generation of young women and young men that equality benefits all.

There is a moment though to reflect on the fact that we can still be sometimes shocked by the revelations of even our modern times. Earlier this week I was really delighted to host a round table convened by the Domestic and Family Violence Commissioner, Micaela Cronin. It followed a round table, that I was very proud to be part of at Government House in October last year, that was convened for Queen Camilla when she was here with King Charles. And it was a request made by the palace to have a round table in Canberra about domestic and family violence. And at that event, just as there was on Monday with the event hosted by Micaela, the conversation was led by First Nations women about some of the drivers of violence in our society and then an open conversation, this time, with all of the Commonwealth Commissioners responsible for domestic and family violence, children and families, human rights leaders, veterans' leaders.

It was a remarkable conversation, one that I think started in the deeply policy-driven world but soon became one about personal story-sharing. And the things that were shared around that table, including by those in very senior offices, about personal experience of domestic violence, intergenerational trauma; it started a conversation that we were able to have as, well, I was able to observe that group of leaders, actually working together in the spirit of, I think, the organisation here to work out how collaboration would do so much more for the change we need to see the end of violence against women.

And so, it feels to me like it's very important that we're here at the Arboretum. It's a perfect place to contemplate the long view. That violence discussion is one of the long views over years, decades, generations of trauma, and yet we can be in a place where we look out at the trees that were planted by those that knew they were creating something they may never see. Planting trees whose shade they would never really get to enjoy but doing the work for those that we haven't yet met. None of us will see this landscape in its full maturity, that'll go to our children and their children, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't put the time in to plant those trees. It's patient work, just as it is for gender equality. It's intergenerational process of growth and change. And that's why I keep showing up at International Women's Days every year to keep reminding ourselves that it's worth every bit of effort that we all put into this.

Now, like so many of you, I've also, as you heard from my CV, been working for many years and decades in and around organisations, agencies, boards and community groups to argue for the social and economic equality for women. I've done that in many regards, but it's been alongside so many of you in this room and those around the country. And I won't go into that work other than to say that, before I joined this office, two committees I was part of, the New South Wales Economic Opportunities Committee and the Women's Economic Equality Task Force that Katy Gallagher convened, those two panels taught me so much about how quickly the patient work can become policy.

And I want to acknowledge Katy Gallagher, Senator Katy Gallagher, Minister for Women, Minister for Finance, and Matt Kean, who was then the Treasurer of New South Wales; two leaders who could drive policy from very specific places, who heard the call for equality and then backed groups of us into doing the work. Both said, "Be bold, use the language that helps us make good policy." Both then led reforms, both in New South Wales and at the Commonwealth level, that have seen

so many reforms delivered that started in good evidence, good practise, and the work of women, not just policymakers, but those with lived experience of the issues of inequality. And I just feel so proud of the fact that the women and men I worked with in that process can all look very contentedly at the fact that sometimes the policy advocacy can turn into policy change.

I think for an audience that's involved in policy, that was an exercise in collaboration, making sure that public and private sector, not-for-profits, community sectors, policymakers, politicians were all engaged in what we were seeking; which wasn't just equality for women, although it was, it was for an equal country with a better chance of success if all people could be equal.

So, like my predecessors in this job, Dame Quentin as well as General Hurley, Sir Peter Cosgrove, all of those before me, now I can no longer do that kind of work. I can't join committees and advocate in that same way. But what I can do, and what all the former living governors-general taught me, is that I have the most immense privilege now. I listen and observe, I encourage and honour. The office of the governor-general of Australia has no power to determine or influence policy. It has no politics, it has no money to give, it cannot pass judgement and it cannot withhold favour, but the role has the most incredible superpowers, to convene and host. That's what we're dealing with earlier this week with Micaela Cronin and the Commonwealth Commissioners.

I can also bring together people to discuss and debate the things that matter to the country and in those moments it's my job, on your behalf and on the country's behalf, to listen, to observe, to follow up, to go and visit places where governors-generals haven't been before, but where I'm told I must be in order to understand what it is that will be mighty about our future.

It was Sir Zelman Cowen who said it's the role of all governors-general during this privilege to ensure that the light and shade of our national story is always played back to all Australians. And it was Sir William Deane, still here in Canberra, 93 years old, still healthy, a mind as fine as it was when he was governor-general and a high court justice, he told me that the work, in addition to shining the light and shade, is also rooted in something very simple and that's compassion.

So on International Women's Day and a celebration with you particularly, as an audience in Canberra, I want to share the fact that it is compassion and it is the contribution to our nation's future by listening and learning and observing, and doing that with great care, that I can help make a contribution, and that's where I feel the immense privilege of this role. But I also must tell you that there is both light and shade. It won't always be happy stories, although there are so many of those. Telling the stories of the shade makes as much difference as it does to celebrate the truly great things about our country.

This time of the year, of course, we have been celebrating the very best of the light and that has been our Australians of the Year. Those that are honoured in the Australia Day Honours list, they're incredible people. And I'm travelling the country now visiting all the finalists in the Australians of the Year. I've been going to every part of the country just to spend time with those remarkable finalists, so that they are seen and the work that they do continues to drive our future. From Aish Kansakar in Victoria, a woman in her 20s who is already a global leader in artificial intelligence, building a business, having come as a refugee from Nepal as a young woman speaking six languages, now leading a business out of Melbourne. To Katrina Wruck in Queensland, a young First Nations woman, doing the most incredible research. And as part of a team of the most exceptional women researchers and leaders at QUT, she exemplifies the very best of what change can look like. And she is our Young Australian of the Year.

And then, to Di Haggerty, one part of the couple in West Australia, the West Australians of the Year. Di, and her husband, Ian, are pioneering the most incredible work on changing our agricultural system and supercharging our soils and including supercharging our food. To Jacinta Vu in West Australia, one of the most remarkable young women I've had the privilege to meet, whose dentistry service, it's a not-for-profit, Healing Smiles, has been built to help women who are the victims and survivors of domestic violence to rebuild their lives with a mouth and teeth that they can smile through. They've already used trauma-informed dental care as a sign of support for those women for over 550 women just in Perth. They've got a waiting list of another 500. But they've pulled together a group of volunteers, women dentists, to do the hard painstaking work to find a safe space for those women to regain their smiles.

These are incredible people, incredible women, doing things that tell us a story of us at our very best. There are many men involved in this work. On a day like today I do like to celebrate the women, but they are often doing this in partnership with very, very decent men who understand the job ahead.

But then there are times where the shade is important to talk about. In Blacktown, I had the tremendous privilege of visiting Flourish Australia's Women and Children's programme, where young mothers who are escaping violence, experiencing homelessness, addiction, or mental health issues are cared for up to six months so they can be good mums. It's an incredible place to visit. It's where light and shade collide. There've been over 900 at-risk mothers and children who have learnt to become great mothers with the care and compassion of those that work with them at Flourish.

So, it's this light and shade that I'm finding in this role that makes it both a great privilege, but a great responsibility, to work out how to get that balance right. So, in a week where we learnt that women still don't earn as much as men, a bit of a shade, we do learn that we can shine a light on things that do matter, and we'll see, I think, equality over the years ahead. And I'm not prepared to wait 134 years, that the World Economic Forum's gender pay gap work tells us it'll take to get to gender parity, we've just got to get there in decades, not centuries.

Now one thing I do know, and I want to just spend a moment talking about men, because I think we need to shine some of that light onto the men who recognise that equality is everyone's business. In 2019, my friend, David Leser, wrote a book called Men, Women, and the Whole Damn Thing, I give that book to as many people as I can. In it, he says, "I'd like to believe there's a legion of us men who know that our own liberation is joined to the liberation of women, who recognise that the triumphs and achievements of one cannot happen without the triumphs and achievements of the other. And that the next part of the women's movement is a men's movement that rejects so many of the old definitions of masculinity. We've had the shake-up, now it's time for the wake-up."

And David's call for the need for respectful conversations with men and boys really underscores that that's such a vital part of what we all must do and what I do in this role. It's something I'm seeing across the encounters I have with all Australians in all communities across the country, where men are saying enough is enough to sexism, to misogyny and standing beside women. They're the dads who are sharing the

childcare, who are comfortable with partners and wives who earn more than them, and they're picking up parental leave with the same degree of commitment as women always have. They're the guys who are driving their daughters not just to see the Matildas or the Australian women's cricket team triumph, but they're also taking them to the training in sports that those girls may not have ever seen as a pathway for themselves, like AFLW, cricket and soccer. That's all part of the conversation this country has got to continue and that's what I've seen in the conversations wherever I go.

I also heard it from Connor. Connor's, a young man who celebrates the fierceness with which his mother fought to keep him and his brother safe from family violence. And he talks about needing policies and systems that are as fierce in their work as his mum was in protecting him from the violence that he grew up with. And because of his advocacy, he joined us in that round table with Queen Camilla and talked about the need to always bring children, boys and girls, into the stories about what we hoped for equality and how we keep everybody safe.

Now the last thing I wanted to turn to, and then I'm going to use a few props because I think sometimes props are a light in the morning. But I do think it's important that as the second woman in this role, and to see so many women who are leading in this room, together with the men who are leading with us, just to acknowledge that when we stand up in a public sphere, we do face risks. We face risks as women when we lead or even participate in public life.

I could ask almost any woman in this room in a public role about the feedback you get, most of it unsolicited, most of it online, most of it truly degrading in the way in which it looks at us as women. Ask any woman about the coverage or commentary she gets, particularly the unsolicited version. Ask whether she receives insults, threats of violence, misogynist abuse online sometimes daily. And we only need to listen to our eSafety Commissioner, when she tells us that so many women in middle management in policy and public life often turn away from stepping up into the spotlight for fear of a life lived with that kind of behaviour.

It's always very hard to weigh up that freedom and safety. It's the work that Anne Summers reminds us about that woman, when they choose to leave violent partners, often are doing so into a world of poverty, but they're escaping violence. I think it's the same with women. Not the same level, but there is a similar decision that's made by women who step up into public life, about the need to be present, to lead and show what's possible but deal with the backlash. Now, I'm not going to tell you about the backlash that I've had in this role because that's a bit of shade that I don't need to share with you because the light of what I get just outshines that every time.

And so, when the prime minister asked me to serve as your governor-general, he asked me to do it in three ways. He said he wanted a modern, visible and optimistic governor-general. It was an opportunity to change the debate on what senior public life could look like as we talk about the future of the country. And it's the main reason that, together with Simeon, my husband and our daughter, Lottie, as a family we said yes to being modern, visible and optimistic. And so, I thought I'd just share with you a couple of props and things that I now receive that say that there is a reason to be optimistic by being visible and being modern. Modernity in the work we're doing matters, the way in which we can progress change and do policy. It needs to be done in a thoroughly modern way, but with visibility and optimism.

And the reason I'm sharing these with you is that I now receive lots and lots of books. People know I love books; I've always got books on me. And so, I receive scripts for plays that I could put on at Government House. I'm With Her, stories that tell, in the voices of those that came before us, how we can do better, but how we pay respect to all the change that's come before.

I got a fantastic book from Tim Ross, well-known broadcaster. He celebrates the best of design in Australia, and I hope he doesn't mind me doing this, but he sent me several of his books. But he said this in his lovely handwritten note, I love receiving the handwritten notes. He'd be having a bad week when he sent me this and he had listened to some words about how we can uplift policy and he said, "This really lifts my spirit. Something I really believe in. Public service is something we don't value these days, and I thank you for yours and for everybody who steps up in public service."

I get to get these lovely cards that remind us, not just me, but all of you, that the work you do is often seen by people. It's a bit like those trees; The people who plant them don't get to sit under the shade. Policymakers, people who create change, often don't get to see the work you do. You don't see the shadow you're casting. I'll never know really who I'm affecting in my role, but sometimes I get letters like this.

And then when I farewelled Carolyn Kennedy, the US Ambassador who recently left us to return to family duties in the US, she left me with something she did for her mother. It's a book called *She Walks in Beauty*, and it's a collection of poetry that she put together to honour her mother, who she believed had never been seen in the policy debates because of the enormous, enormous profile that her father had, John F. Kennedy. And so, she gave me *A Woman's Journey Through Poems*, which I can read often to get me through the days.

Sir William Deane sent me a copy of his *Directions*, and *A Vision for Australia* and said, "With all good wishes for the years ahead. In friendship, Bill." Don't call me Sir William, call me Bill and talk about compassion. I carry these kinds of books with me. I refer to them all the time when I'm thinking about how we create change.

And then a dear, dear set of friends sent me this recently when I had a bit of a battering, for instance in the media and they sent me *The Virago Book of Friendship*. And I guess I wanted to end today, and I'll end this morning before we have the chat, to talk about the fact that policy work is hard. It is long. It takes a lot out of us, all of us, men and women. And as we celebrate the idea of marching on and creating equality, we've got to be good friends. We've got to reach out to those that are doing the hard work who might be having a hard time. Shine that light, do the stuff on the shade, but in the light, helping those women leaders, and the men who stand up for women as leaders, is a vital part of what we do in celebrating International Women's Day. It really matters. It matters when I receive these that I know that the work is worth doing and that being optimistic, visible and modern is something that helps with policy. It helps with the future.

So, wherever I go, I find these stories emerging. I'll continue to share them wherever I do go. There will be a lot lighter than shade, but the shade will teach us what we still must do in the roles that we all play.

I think I'll leave it there and come back to Helen Williams. Because Helen Williams changed my life, just as many of those trailblazers did for a young woman when I was in my late 20s and 30s, thinking about whether any of us could ever make the world a better place and how we would do that. And to see Helen Williams spend so much time in that lonely role as the only woman, as a secretary of a Commonwealth department, pioneering her work, always kind, always compassionate, always smart, always prepared to take on ministers in the best possible way that public servants can do with fearlessness.

I watched her quietly. She'll never know that story because she was a busy, busy leader of a department and I was a junior policy advisor. But Helen Williams changed my direction and made me very interested in policy, and in standing up and being fearless, and knowing that the work really matters. So, I'm so delighted to be presenting the Helen Williams Oration because she changed my life and I hope she had lots of friendship and felt the warmth that I feel in the room today. Thank you very much.

GENEVIEVE JACOBS AM:

Thank you, Governor-General, for that wonderful oration. And we're now joined on the stage by Michelle Steele. Michelle is a Kamilaroi/Gomeroi Yinarr woman from Moree, New South Wales, and she's the Chief First Nations Officer at the Paul Ramsey Foundation. Prior to that, Michelle worked in the public sector for more than 18 years and she was a leader in key policy areas delivering for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, particularly health and aged care. During the pandemic, she led the COVID-19 Indigenous and Remote Policy and Implementation Branch, supporting the pandemic response and vaccine implementation programme through a strong partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sectors. And genuine respectful partnerships forged through the advisory group.

Michelle has represented Australia at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous People. She's also an inaugural Fellow of the Atlantic Fellows for Social Equity programme and that's an Indigenous-led lifelong collaborative fellowship programme and platform for systemic change. She has an executive MBA from QUT and she's also a wonderful friend and board member for us at Hands Across Canberra.

Late last year, Michelle and I were both very privileged to attend the Governor-General's She Gives Summit at Yarralumla. We happened to walk up the driveway together and we said to each other, "How did two bush girls like us from Moree and Quandialla end up here?" So, we're going to have a conversation for about 10 minutes or so and then I'll turn it over to you for your questions, so be prepared.

Governor-General, I'm going to start with you. I know that care and caring is a very important part of your work and a theme of your time as governor-general. Lots of women in leadership have experienced the fear or the reality of being judged as soft, not up to the tough tasks if you show warmth and care. Tell me how you've personally reconciled that sometimes quite poisonous equation.

HONOURABLE MS SAM MOSTYN AC: It's a really, great question, and it's the one I asked myself when I accepted the role. I had a period between me being announced as your governor-general to being sworn in, it was a couple of months. And after I'd gone and seen all the former governors-general and former prime ministers, and all the governors and administrators around the country, I sat with Simeon and Lottie as a family and talked about what would be a sign of success in doing this job? And how would we know that having said yes to public service of this kind, that it would make a difference? And so, I kept reflecting on those three words from the prime minister. So, the modernity was a big one and about being visible and optimistic.

And for many, many years I'd spoken about care, about the care economy through COVID, those who do the caring that we don't pay, we don't acknowledge. The care that goes on all the time that's led by elders in our First Nations communities, the care in migrant communities. I'd just seen care wherever I'd gone leading up to my appointment. But I'd always been told that you don't talk about care; it's women's work, it's valuable in a way, but it's not a key economic driver. And the work we did as a panel for the Minister for Finance suddenly gave this very sharp edge to how care was a whether it's a backbone of the nation's success or a muscle that you must exercise regularly to be a successful society.

I suddenly thought, "Care's not easy." Actually, care is one of the hardest things you'll ever commit to. It is that care's got to be accountable, it's got to show up, it's got to be measurable, it's got to keep going. And it's not about these small random acts that we like to think about that's soft or feminine, unpaid, uncared about. It's the thing that if we committed to as a nation, and we see it in community work all the time, you see it in Hands for Canberra, that that's the work. The work is care. And so, I felt by elevating care as a principle and as a muscle for the country to exercise, to show how hard it is, to show how valuable it is and use care in everything I did, that that would be the most useful thing I could do from this office.

And I guess it partners with my comments this morning about why we do the work, because we do want to see an equal world. We do want to see a place where everyone has a sense of achievement and can thrive. And a country with our kind of story, I was getting very worried that complacency in the richness of the advantages we have would also mean that we would give up on the idea that care was an essential feature of what creates success.

And we've got some of the best examples in the world of care from First Nations communities and how care works. And we now get a lot of that from those that most recently arrived. I see that from the women and men who've just arrived, who talk about the fact that they've come to a place that has care at its centre, stable democracy, equality, but care.

And so, I push back on anyone that talks about it being a feminine trait, a soft trait. It's hard. And those that are involved in care, which is all of us, know that when you keep caring, you must show up. But then we've got to better measure this and show why it's such an essential element of a strong nation.

GENEVIEVE JACOBS AM:

Michelle, if I can go to you on that. The idea of caring for country, for mob, for the totality of creation is central to First Nations culture. I've read that very impressive CV of yours. You've also spent a lot of time in leadership positions. How do we position caring as a positive attribute of leadership?

MICHELLE STEELE:

Yeah. And thank you so much. For starters, wow, what a room. I have had the absolute privilege obviously as a public servant for over 18 years of working with many of you here, also too, many of you working with me within the roles in which I did. And many people in which I look across here and go, I want to work with into the future as well. So, I'm only 43, I've still got a long public service career, when I do return, ahead of me as well, so I'm really looking forward to that. And hopefully like one of you, especially some of our young Indigenous peoples, I've already had a chat to Melee this morning, say for example with the NIAA room, hopefully will inspire some people to want to be up here into the future as well.

But for me, I think care is absolutely I can say it's care for country; it's care for community and its care for culture. And those things are really, important because they're inherent in who I am, not only as a person but as a leader as well. Because those people before me, like Her Excellency, in honouring those people in positions before her, was also too important to who I am. My mum was a leader within our own community. She was one of the very first working mums to go out and work as opposed to being at home with a lot of the children.

I was raised by the aunties, by the village as such, there in Moree as well. But it was my grandmother who was also too a ballroom teacher as well that had started a lot of that care. And she used to help a lot of the Aboriginal babies that were born either in the hospital or outside the hospital. And even before that, my great-grandmother was one of the last Aboriginal babies born underneath the birthing tree in Terri Hie Hie, just outside of Moree.

So, this care and this love has always been within me, but it's an honouring of those women before me as well that actually brings me into the position where I am today, where I do get to care about those outcomes in a really big and meaningful way, and is that care for that also then allows me to challenge, I think, as well. And we often don't think... we do think of care as a feminine thing to do, but actually the care and that want for change and that want for a better and that need to aspire, that be bold be brave approach, actually means then that we do get to care to challenge the systems that are put into that. Challenge the barriers that we have. And I do think that the care is really an amazing quality that we often under-represent because we often see it on that soft side as opposed to it can bring you to that hard side as well, which is to have those tough conversations, but those necessary ones.

HONOURABLE MS SAM MOSTYN AC: Can I add just everything that you just said? And that's why I think we should be listening to First Nations principles so often with a huge degree of respect and learning. And I'd like to take that care thing through to care for institutions and civics and talk about caring about institutions in this country really matters. Caring about civics really matters.

And when we hear research that says generations of young people give up on civics, they haven't given up on civics. And they're young, they are deeply interested, and I see 25,000 students come through Government House every year, that actively engage. What they've given up on or are worried about is the people holding positions of high office within our civics and our civil society because they want to see more people who talk about care. They understand that imagining a place where leaders, men and women, talk about care and show care for one another across divides, for them is an important story about the future rather than being in contest or anger or fury. And so, I think it's an interesting thing about how do we care for the way we have debates? How do we care about being leaders and show that we can disagree and disagree well, but with care? And that's, I think, there's a big role for anyone in public office.

GENEVIEVE JACOBS AM: So, you've both spoken powerfully about that notion of care and I just want to unpick what might be perhaps getting in the road. Governor-General, we were both, as you referenced, at the most wonderful, very slightly chaotic Iftar dinner on Sunday night. And we were talking about things like cooking, me, knitting scarves, you. Women are often told not to talk about those kinds of things publicly because you would sort of cede your power. And if you think about the default notion of leadership that still lingers, it doesn't often embed the idea of care, of caring for whatever gender it is, of doing anything that's humanly connected. I mean, it's as if no woman who makes biscuits for her staff will ever lead this nation. How do we in this room change that sort of default idea of leadership that gets in the way of the very powerful things you've both been discussing?

HONOURABLE MS SAM MOSTYN AC: Well, I think, and it's easy for me to say this, and it's hard to do in practise, it's about bringing our full selves to every part of our lives. And so, you're making biscuits for your team to show that you care enough about them, that it's important to you to make those biscuits, is the same as me sitting knitting and chatting to women about what an appalling knitter I am. But that knitting and being part of craft and the craft movement, which was not just women, a lot of men, gives me a lot of happiness, and I love giving handmade gifts. It's a corny thing. But if I don't share that and don't tell that story at the risk of being seen to be somehow soft or not up to the job, then I'm not allowing myself and my full sense of who I am.

I can be a very effective, I hope, governor-general and do hard things and represent the country, but I can also knit. And I think sometimes we have such binary views of what this says about us. When I go to a country town or a big city and I'm welcomed in by the Country Women's Association, I've done it in Perth recently, and I meet women who are the toughest, dealing with the toughest issue at the very centre of where community, where violence, where the need for support happens. And we happened to be talking about craft as a method of getting to a discussion about what needs to change. Those women, country women, regional women, Aboriginal women, migrant women, there is something about just bringing our whole self, because in that conversation, that's where you get change and that's what collaboration and care and love for one another really feels like.

I'd love to talk to more men about their secret guilty pleasures and the things that they're doing as CEOs or policymakers, because I reckon, they'd feel a bit unleashed by it as well. And be proud about the things that we are just not one thing, we are multitudes, we are... it's all those things. But the more we stereotype, the more we put people into these areas, and it's in policy too, the more a public servant thinks that the private sector only cares about money, or the private sector thinks that policymakers don't understand the economy, or arts people don't like sports people. Our civil society doesn't like those that are in business. Those things are all false narratives. We all care generally, I think, about the same outcomes and if we can relax on whether you make biscuits or I knit, but we care about the same things, I think that's where we open rich conversations.

MICHELLE STEELE: I'm not crafty whatsoever.

GENEVIEVE JACOBS AM: It doesn't have to be about craft.

MICHELLE STEELE:

And the staff in this room, and I'm looking directly at Annette over there as well, will know this, I did not cook either. In fact, I can be bought with wine and cheese and food. And even one of my former staff as well, Dolly, who's not here in this room, but used to call her Dolly Roo because you know that the quickest way to get me to decide or to be happy is through my tummy. So, I love receiving foods as opposed to baking them. So, I would never leave this country cooking because I just don't cook.

But in saying that, I agree, we've all got something that we need to take care of. During COVID as well, as I was sharing this story before, we were working 18 hours a day, seven days a week. And for the days that I wasn't working, I was thinking and ticking off in my mind. I'd be waking up at 1:00 AM, writing voice notes, recording voice notes or writing notes to myself because of that. And then over the last couple of years, I've really had to work out how to care for myself, not just as well as care for others. And I've really found that link now and that beautiful kind of balance between caring for self and caring for others at the same time. Just not through cooking, or weaving. My sister is a great weaver. Cannot do that.

GENEVIEVE JACOBS AM:

I really do just want to touch on, if you want to see the definition of power in action, I think, watch what happens when the CWA walks into the premier's office, because that's raw power taking effect.

HONOURABLE MS SAM MOSTYN AC:

Our 1977 Australian of the Year, so Dame. I don't know if you know her, Dame Raigh (Roe) Oh, this is terrible She was the president of Country Women's Association, WA, president of the Australian Country Women's Association. Then she went and led the Global Country Women's Association and travelled to every part of the world advocating for justice, equality, just like Eleanor Roosevelt. We've got our own women in these stories who have been buried in history and yet that was happening in the '70s.

GENEVIEVE JACOBS AM:

Absolutely.

HONOURABLE MS SAM MOSTYN AC:

I think that she was a stalwart of the CWA movement, but out there doing things that we don't talk about, we don't reflect on as great change makers.

GENEVIEVE JACOBS AM:

Michelle, I just wanted to go to you and we're getting close to the time for your questions from the floor, but in boardrooms, we know that diversity is about bringing lots of brains and lots of perspectives into decision-making to make it better. It's not about ticking boxes. Do you think that diversity in the way we lead matters as much as who is doing the leading?

MICHELLE STEELE:

Absolutely. And even now within my current role with the Paul Ramsey Foundation, but also too in the Hands Across Canberra board, consensus is a really hard thing to achieve. And I think if you're achieving consensus, then you're in the wrong boardroom. And so, for me anyway, it's not only just been about a personal challenge and growth to listen and do things differently, and as I said before about that challenge, and that opportunity that that challenge can bring. But it's just recognising really, quickly that it's not about what you know, it's about all those things that can come in together. And so, my perspective and the way in which I come, I come from a 65,000-year kind of history and things that I take so seriously, that the weight of that expectation can play out horrendously sometimes. But it also means that I get to take other people's perspectives and where they've come from and what they've been brought into.

And even more recently, I remember sitting back and reflecting on our executive at PRF, and someone had said about, "Oh, but Michelle, you're the only diverse person there." And I'm like, "I'm not." And more importantly, I get to sit in privilege today, but that doesn't mean that I come from that. So don't make that assumption either about somebody else, because we're always bringing something with us.

So yeah, as I said, I cannot say enough that if we don't have a cultural challenge, then we can't have a culture of change. And that's just how it is. And so, if we are not doing that in the boardroom, whether it's bringing our diversity status, but then our diversity of thoughts, then I think that the ultimate losers of that are the people in which we honestly work extremely hard for.

GENEVIEVE JACOBS AM:

And I think we must really hold onto that, at a time when the ideas about diversity are under challenge, that we must remember, it's not about the appearances, it's about the reality of bringing a wide range of backgrounds, of perceptions, of ways of thinking into that space.

MICHELLE STEELE:

And especially in the public service, I mean that's even harder, right? Because people often confuse government as government as in parliament, but there's so many layers to government, senior executive, middle management, all those things that we talk about. And so, when we're really thinking about it, I think the best opportunity that we can have been influence as well, rather than advocate. And so, I feel like there is a way in which that diversity can come through more freely and more truly. And that's the greatest part, I think, about public policy as well.

GENEVIEVE JACOBS AM:

Governor-General, just before I turn finally to questions from the floor, today's theme is Turning Promises into Progress, March Forward. You and I are of an age, second and then third wave feminism has defined our lives. But my goodness, I still get frustrated. And certainly, any woman in this room who has had something of a public profile, your comments about the kind of pushback you get will have resonated. I've certainly been through that myself as someone with a profile in media. Why aren't we there yet?

HONOURABLE MS SAM MOSTYN AC:

I mean, I honestly wish I knew the answer to that question. Because the gains for all of us are so obvious if we didn't have this drag that came from either the way we're treated, the way we're disrespected, the violence, and our hopes always for a better time. I think, I don't know why we're not there, except that complacency and not showing up delays everything. So, I think we can't be complacent about any of the great richness of this country. I think it gets back to those sorts of modern, visible and optimistic. We've got to use the language of community. We've got to be optimistic in what we do. Sometimes I think we go into those weaknesses rather than strength based. And I think that's what we learned from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people about strength-based things.

I think we're fearful of listening to community and fearful of listening to place-based solutions that are designed by communities dealing with their issues. And we always got to kind of push ourselves back up to some system we hope will fix things, when we know that most things get fixed when you listen to people actively engaged at the community level, and often those people just cannot get heard. So, I think if we can open more of the pathways of those, not just with lived experience, but those that understand that system change in local communities where people live, where they work, actually will drive it. And we're fearful of that, I think. I think we're risk averse and think it's got to be always up at the top level, with a policymaker, a policy announcement. I think with policymakers to spend time with people who are involved in daily policymaking in

community, there's just a richness there that I just don't think we mine.

GENEVIEVE JACOBS AM: No, absolutely.

HONOURABLE MS SAM MOSTYN AC: I think that delays everything.

GENEVIEVE JACOBS AM: Yeah. It's the intellectual capital of the whole country.

HONOURABLE MS SAM MOSTYN AC: Correct, correct.

GENEVIEVE JACOBS AM: And you cut that off if you cut anybody out of that equation. Let's take a couple of questions from the floor. We've got time for perhaps three or four questions. Now we've got IPAA staff members with microphones, so if you're selected, please do just stand up and say your name and your organisation. And please do wait until you've got the microphone so we can capture the audio for the recording. And I can see the first hand up down the end here. We'll just get the microphone to you.

MELISSA COADE: Hello, Melissa Coade from The Mandarin. Thank you so much for the panel's talk and the governor-general's address. Earlier this week or last week, I heard the governor-general address the university's Australia Forum where she also draws on these themes of care and infusing care and leadership and public policy and public office. I'd like to ask the panel to reflect on the invitation to show more compassion, more consultation with community, where the community is and how this buttress with anti-woke sentiment, anti-ruling class sentiment, and how that might potentially demonise the good intentions behind bureaucrats attempting to show and practise the care we speak of?

GENEVIEVE JACOBS AM: It's a brilliant question. And Governor-General, I'll go to you just quickly first on that if I can.

HONOURABLE MS SAM MOSTYN AC: Well, I think the question is the statement in a way. I think we can't be frightened by the critique of the intention of the work. So, you're right to raise the fact that we're living in a world where this term woke, just such a lazy, hackneyed phrase to try to cruel something that's about being better and doing good things. And your point about diversity is pushback against talking to diverse groups. Listening to diverse groups is not woke, it's very awake to the fact that the best governance, the best systems, as you've already described, always come from a contest of ideas, of curiosity, of working that through. Doing the hard work and coming up with a solution you wouldn't come up with if you just applied a monocultural background of people who think they know everything and have always felt that comfort of their own confidence.

So, I think what we've got to do is demonstrate more and more just how powerful that act of consultation and of listening and of integrating that into policy can be. And show the results of that in the outcomes and celebrate those places where these things are going well. There are many, many things going on well. The justice reinvestment programme in Bourke-

MICHELLE STEELE: Yeah, the Maranguka.

HONOURABLE MS SAM MOSTYN AC: You might want to speak about that. But trusting that community on one of the most sensitive issues of crime and recidivism and trusting a community with money and resources and an outcome, it defies something that I think policymakers would be criticised for letting go of something and not having a risk assessment around it. So, I just think we've got to address what you said and make sure that those in policy can engage in this work.

GENEVIEVE JACOBS AM: Michelle.

MICHELLE STEELE: And that's the value. I remember my first Canberra-based public policy, so it was with the Department of Finance, and I had a wonderful secretary at the time, but the theory always behind it was frank and fearless. And it was constantly frank and fearless, frank and fearless. And I've really taken that throughout all my public service career and even now into philanthropy, where I do get to get, it is about frank and fearless. If no one wants to hear or take that advice that is up to them, but at least at the end of the day I can sit back and go, "I gave my best advice and my best advice is." But that advice does not come from just instinct. That advice comes from years of engaging with people.

Even in now I get to sit around with communities and listen. And I remember one leader, Fiona Jose, said to me up at KPL partnerships, "Michelle, come with these, don't come with solutions. And then at the end of this, let's sit back, and listen and reflect on what you said." And that was the most important thing, because I heard stories of, sometimes it was just a \$2,000 laptop because someone broke their laptop, but they can't operate without it. But no government funding allows for small asset purchase because we're just trying to keep our lights on. All the way through to some complex things around we want a justice for investment programme. And so, people just want to be heard ultimately, I think, with that as well. And so, in saying that and drawing on that thread into justice reinvestment, you are so right.

The Maranguka programme, if you look at the statistics, recidivism, crime rates and everything come down, then they're back on the rise. Now they're kind of like stable, but they're still quite high in the comparison. And a lot of funders would sit their hands back and go, "That's not working." But because we get to listen deeply with that community and because we get to sit with them often, what we've heard is that what's happening in that community is the role of discretion in the community that's being used and how that impacts the numbers.

So, for example, the education system, so the principal, the head teachers and all that, have discretion on whether they keep a student at school. They have discretion on whether they suspend them or whether they do in-school suspensions, or they keep them in the classroom and they get extra aids and supports to be able to help that child in the school. So, when you're looking then at crime rates and associated them with a disassociation from the education system, is that a failure of the parents and the children or is that a failure together of the system in which schools were never actually ever developed to enhance Indigenous people's education outcomes?

But we have seen then examples of successes where that is the case. So, for example, the Giingana Gubaynggirr Freedom School up in Coffs Harbour, where it teaches by Aboriginal language first, where it teaches and bound by culture first in everything that they do. The kids get to go out and do fire burning with their elders, for example. And it's not classified as being absent from school, it's classified as being part of school because culture is important. And those students, especially at the year six level, are achieving the exact same rate as every New South Wales, and if not higher than every other student. So, if that school can do that, then what is the sharing's and the learnings that can be had through collaborations in the Bourke so that that school becomes more culturally appropriate, more responsive for those students. And so, I love our justice reinvestment programme, even this morning I was talking to Katherine about it because it is one of the highlights and it does genuinely recognise what Her Excellency said through her speech, which is change takes time.

HONOURABLE MS SAM MOSTYN AC: Can I just reference a partner example I've seen recently? This is part of throwing back, I guess, a bit of light. If you visit Settlement Services International and the work that Violet Roumeliotis does, she found in a system that we have a highly gendered process of settlement, particularly for refugees. So, we talk a great story of our wonderful migrant story of refugees being welcoming into this country. But if you go to Fairfield in Western Sydney and you sit with a group of women who came through our settlement services and without Violet setting up a gender-based analysis, what happens when they arrive and the risks they faced, personal safety to lack of employment, and you look at their education.

So, some of these women are coming from the Ukraine at the moment, they're out of university, they arrive at settlement services process, the system says, "We're done. The settlement's happening, we'll hand it over to the providers." And unless someone like SSI creates a place for those women to come and tell those stories, they will fall dramatically into deprivation, into unemployment, into violence. And these are some of the most highly educated women and men who are arriving to be part of our future story.

So, the policy question would be, what's Violet doing with a women's service that finds these women and gets them back into employment and shows the value of that to our economy? Where does she sit and that knowledge sit for policymakers? Because you'd have to take a lot of trust to go and spend time and put money there in Fairfield rather than in the top end of the system of settlement. That's not to say people aren't doing great work in settlement and across the whole public service. But when you sit and listen deeply to the experience of women and men who arrive and then are lost to us, because we didn't do something that required this active listening, that's on all of us.

GENEVIEVE JACOBS AM: So, I think this has been about care, about compassion, about bravery, about consultation. You've had three women up on stage with plenty to say, so I am just going to call the conversation to a close now because I'm conscious that there are many people in this room who also need to go and make some decisions roundabout now in the next half hour. But thank you so much, both of you, for your time and for your insights. The Honourable Sam Mostyn AC, the Governor-General of Australia, Michelle Steele of the Paul Ramsey Foundation. Could we please give them a very warm round of applause? As we leave the stage, I'd like to invite Carolina Dorman from Minter Ellison to give a vote of thanks.

CAROLINA DORMAN:

Thank you, Genevieve. Good morning everyone. What a beautiful morning and what a beautiful view it is from up here of a full room. For those that don't already know, I'm Carolina Dorman, I'm a partner with Minter Ellison in our data technology and digital team here in Canberra. More relevant to the topic today, I'm also partner sponsor of both of our Women Inclusion Committee and our Cultural Diversity Committee. I'm incredibly proud of those roles that I have within our firm.

At Minter Ellison, we champion and advocate for inclusion. We do this because our diversity is our greatest strength and it is fundamental to our character and identity. We know, as being mentioned today, that when we bring together diversity of thinking, skills, experience, genders and backgrounds, we thrive, and we deliver excellent results for our clients, our people, and our communities.

Minter Ellison is incredibly proud of its long relationship with IPAA, as a Tier One corporate partner and of a long relationship in sponsoring the Helen Williams Oration since its inception in 2018. This event is a great chance for us to take the time to celebrate women as leaders, as achievers and change-makers, and it is one of my personal favourites out of all the fantastic events that IPAA hosts throughout the year. Like Helen Williams, our panellists today are ground breakers in their respective fields and have generously shared their experiences with us today.

As we close on what has been an engaging and insightful discussion, I stand here to extend a heartfelt vote of thanks to everyone who has contributed to the success of this event. I would like to thank our wonderful speakers for taking time out of their busy schedules to be here with us this morning, it is much appreciated. Firstly, Her Excellency, the Honourable Sam Mostyn AC, thank you for sharing your invaluable experience and perspective. It was fascinating hearing about your first few months in the role of governor-general and the opportunity that the role has brought to you, all the lights and shades. Your keynote address also highlighted the importance of bringing men on the journey to gender equality, and I think it's a very important message that we take away from here today.

Thank you also to Michelle Steele for joining us in the panel discussion and to Genevieve Jacobs AM for facilitating and guiding the panel discussion. The depth of the in-conversation and Q&A session has left us with profound insights and a renewed enthusiasm to drive gender equality in our workplaces.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank IPAA ACT president and board member, Katherine Jones PSM, for her opening remarks, and the IPAA team for putting another outstanding event. A lot of work goes into making these events a success, and the team has done a brilliant job again.

And finally, I would like to thank each one of you here in the room for taking the time to attend today's event. Your support is essential for the success of events like this one. I hope you have all taken out of this morning's event as much as I have, and that you go back to your workplaces re-energised to continue to advance gender equality, and to foster inclusive workplaces. Thank you and have a good rest of the day.