

TRANSCRIPT OF EVENT

IPAA ACT | 2021 HELEN WILLIAMS ORATION

Dr Cathy Foley AO PSM (keynote), Chief Scientist of Australia

Professor Helen Sullivan FIPAA (host), Dean of the College of Asia and the Pacific at the Australian National University and IPAA ACT Councillor

Amanda Story (opening remarks), Partner, MinterEllison

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AMANDA STORY: Welcome everyone. Today's event will be filmed and published by IPAA ACT and it will soon be available online at the IPAA website. Please note that your audience audio today and the camera and chat functions have been disabled to ensure that we haven't interrupted recording. Well, good afternoon and thank you all for joining us today. I'm Amanda story from MinterEllison and I'll provide a very brief partners welcome to Dr Cathy Foley.

Before handing over to today's host, Professor Helen Sullivan, I would like to make an Acknowledgement of Country.

In the spirit of reconciliation, IPAA ACT acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community, we power respect to their Elders past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Islander peoples here today.

I've been invited by IPAA ACT to provide a formal welcome to Dr Foley on behalf of MinterEllison. MinterEllison are long time sponsors of IPAA events and I'm particularly proud of our role in supporting their Helen Williams Oration.

Over a number of years now, we've welcomed speakers at the oration and it's our honour to recognize the important career of Helen Williams and to champion walked. This career has represented for so many people being the progress of women in leadership.

I'd like to introduce today's host, Professor Helen Sullivan, a perfect host for today's event.

Helen is a political sociologist and public policy scholar. Educated in humanities and social sciences, she holds a degree in modern history and political science, women study, and public policy. She serves as Dean of the College of Asia and the Pacific at the Australian National University.

Helen's career is defined by a long-term commitment to bridging the gap between policy and research. In 2013, Helen established the Melbourne School of Government, a multidisciplinary school that broke new ground through its integration of engagement and impact with research and teaching.

In 2017 and 2021 Helen was director at the core Crawford School, the AMU, the Asia Pacific's leading public policy score. Helen's research has won best Paper Publication Awards from Global academic Societies, including the Public Management Research Association and the International Research Society for Public Management. In 2002, Helen was awarded a fellowship in the Higher Education Academy in recognition for her teaching quality and innovation, and in 2016, two has made a national fellow at the Institute of Public Administration, Australia, in recognition for her significant contribution to public policy and administration.

In 2021, she serves as the elected president of the Australian Political Studies Association. So thank you very much, Helen for hosting today's event and it's with great pleasure that I pass over to you.

HELEN SULLIVAN: Thank you so much Amanda for that warm and generous welcome. Good afternoon everyone. It's a pleasure to be here at the 2021 Helen Williams Oration with the Australian Chief Scientist Dr Cathy Foley. I'd also like to acknowledge and extend my respects to the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we are meeting today. I'm here on Ngunnawal and Ngambri lands.

The 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 a significant contribution to public administration in Australia. The annual IPAA ACT oration is held in recognition of Helen Williams AC.

Helen is known to many across the public service, perhaps most notably as the first woman in the Australian public service to be appointed a secretary of an Australian government department.

Helen was appointed as Secretary of the Department of Education in 1985 and went on to be the secretary of several other departments, including the Department of Tourism, the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, the Department of Communication, Information Technology and the Arts and the Department of Human Services. 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 our great profession - the trailblazer for many of us. So IPAA ACT was very pleased that Helen accepted our proposal to host the inaugural Helen Williams Oration in 2018. That year, the oration was delivered by Ann Sherry, then executive chairman of Carnival Australia. In 2019, it was delivered by Dr Megan Clark, head of the Australian Space Agency, and in 2020 it was delivered by Christine Morgan, the CEO of the National Mental Health Commission.

In that spirit, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to Helen Williams, who is watching today from home. IPAA ACT is always proud to host this event in your honour, and we are particularly pleased you are able to make it today. And it's my very happy task now to acknowledge the 2021 presenter of the Helen Williams Oration, Dr Cathy Foley, the Chief Scientist of Australia.

Dr Foley AO PSM commenced as Australia's ninth Chief Scientist in January 2021 after an extensive career at Australia's National Science Agency, the CSIRO. Just up the road from the ANU in fact, Dr Foley is an internationally recognized physicist with major research achievements in superconductors and sensors which led to the development of their LANDTEMP sensor system for locating valuable deposits of minerals deep underground, resulting in discoveries and delineation of minerals worth more than \$6 billion.

Dr Foley, Scientific excellence and influential leadership have been recognized with numerous awards and fellowships, including election to the Australian Academy of Science in 2020, along with an order of Australia for service to research science and to the advancement of women in physics. She's also a fellow of the Australian Academy of Technological Science and Engineering and an honorary Fellow of the Australian Institute of Physics.

Dr Foley is an inspiration to women in STEM across the globe and is committed to improving gender equality and diversity in the science sector to embrace the full human potential of all. And I know from personal experience that Dr Foley's reputation is very highly regarded at the ANU and she is seen as a really important role model for our upcoming female scientists. So welcome to you Dr Foley and over to you for the keynote.

DR CATHY FOLEY: Well, thank you Helen. That was a really lovely introduction and hello everyone.

I am speaking on the traditional lands of the Cammeraygal people. I pay my respects to them and to the traditional custodians of other lands where audience members are based. I acknowledge the elders who are caring for those lands. I pay my respects to the old ones who have come before and the young ones who will follow.

I also want to recognise the people working from home for the past 18 months – I know it's enormously difficult for families, but not only for families. I'm concerned about the impact on people living alone and the lasting effects on young people. Many Australians are experiencing very tough times, and I know that as we focus on pandemic recovery, this is top of mind for governments, business owners and workplace managers alike.

I understand Helen Williams has joined us. Hi Helen. Your achievements have brought us together today and I am honoured that you are here.

When Helen made history in 1985 - becoming the first female Secretary of a Commonwealth department at the age of just 39 - that was the same year I joined the CSIRO as a research fellow.

I can still remember that first day, driving up to the gate and thinking: this could be fun for three years!

Little did I know I would be there for 36!

I'll say at the outset that throughout my research and working career, I have never wanted my gender to be an issue.

My office reached out to Helen Williams as I was preparing to speak with you today and she made a similar observation. She said she always wanted to be treated as a person, first.

Me too! I was focused on getting on with the job of being a scientist.

But gender is not easily ignored. I remember trying to fit in when I studied physics at university, and just be one of the boys in what was a pretty male-dominated environment. So when I got that first position at the CSIRO, I decided to wear a dress on my first day. This was not something I had ever done in the lab when I was at university. But I soon found as the only female research scientist in the applied physics lab and I reverted quickly to wearing trousers to fit in.

I've had enormous support and opportunities in my career. But it is undeniable that challenges and negotiations related to being a woman have always been a part of it.

Now I am, as Australia's Chief Scientist, the most senior science and technology adviser in the country. Yet here I am talking about the challenges facing women in the workplace! I might have wished gender was not an issue, but I acknowledge that it is.

I know also that I am a role model, whether I like it or not, and just like all of the workplace leaders in the audience, our responsibility is to influence for change.

I welcome this opportunity today to talk about these issues. Thank you the IPAA for providing it.

Before I come to the detail, I want to note that while many of my messages are about women, many are not specific to women.

As Australia's Chief Scientist, I see myself as a role model for all young people who might not realise that they can aspire to a career in science. I did it, and I want all young people, however they identify their gender, whatever their background, to know they can too.

But I'll say a little more about that later. First, I want to zero in on some of those points where we need to focus our attention.

For me, it starts at the beginning with encouraging girls into STEM subjects - and young women into STEM careers.

The latest STEM Equity Monitor shows that more than a third of men in tertiary education are studying STEM qualifications; areas related to maths, or the sciences or engineering – excluding health.

But for women, the figure is only 9 per cent.¹

That is, more than 90 per cent of women at university or TAFE are studying for qualifications not related to STEM. When your country is building its future on high-tech STEM-related industries, that's a problem.

¹ <https://www.industry.gov.au/data-and-publications/stem-equity-monitor/vocational-education-and-training-enrolment-and-completion-in-stem-and-other-fields>
<https://www.industry.gov.au/data-and-publications/stem-equity-monitor/university-enrolment-and-completion-in-stem-and-other-fields>

We need more women in engineering, and also in mathematics, IT and the physical sciences.

Where women are entering the STEM fields, it's overwhelmingly in the caring professions such as medical, environmental and veterinary science. That's great and I certainly don't want to discourage it.

I know they are choosing careers where they feel they can make a difference, but I want them to know that they can absolutely make a difference working in the physical sciences, tackling complex issues in areas such as climate, energy and water.

The obvious question is: How do we bring about change?

How do we encourage more girls to study STEM at school and aspire to careers in the fields of science and maths?

I want to acknowledge the work of our Women in STEM Ambassador, Professor Lisa Harvey Smith and others in and outside of government championing this agenda. Seeking out the data that we still don't have and measuring the impact of initiatives underway.

One of the solutions is to improve visibility of science careers – so you can see yourself in a career that makes sense to you if you study physics or chemistry, just as you can with, say, medicine or law.

Students, teachers and parents need to be able to see the end goal – and know what it looks like to have a job in STEM.

Role models are also incredibly important. I am constantly hearing from scientists and researchers about the people who influenced them with they were younger. I know I wouldn't have ended up in science research without role models and encouragement from inspiring teachers and lecturers.

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Once young women enter STEM and research careers, the next problem is keeping them there – and helping them progress upwards.

I have been talking with many early and mid-career researchers this year, and the issues they raise are consistent and concerning:

- Lack of support for flexible and part-time work
- Lack of support for non-linear career paths
- The unhelpful alignment between the timing of university careers and the age when women have children
- The way success is measured, which reflects an out-moded system of publication numbers and the like

It is troubling to hear women saying that going part-time at work damaged their careers.

On the other side of the coin, I have heard from women who felt judged for going back to work too soon.

This feeling of being judged about your parenting decisions is not confined to the research sector.

Helen Williams also speaks about the negative response when she took maternity leave in 1987.

Because of her pioneering role as the first female Secretary, she was seen as letting the side down - "ruining the cause".

It's just so disappointing to be still hearing similar messages from women in their 30s now, 35 years later.

When Helen returned to work she found her position had been disestablished in a reorganisation of departments. So she was suddenly an Associate Secretary ...

Not that it held her back for long. She had a stellar and highly successful career heading a number of departments. But it's salutary.

Helen talks about the need to tackle those structural issues so that if you take time off, or take a period of part-time work, your career doesn't stall – you can return and still progress.

I endorse this wholeheartedly, I would encourage you all to take this message to heart as you consider the role of women in their 30s.

We must also remember that our caregiving structures are in transition. There are so many parenting combinations and our career expectations have to change for everyone, including men.

One solution I found interesting in the research sector is at the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute in Melbourne. They are one of the leading research institutions in the country and have been very proactive on issues of equity – with plenty of lateral thinking.

They have a range of measures around promotions and career breaks to ensure They have a range of measures around promotions and career breaks to ensure women's careers stay on track, including building a childcare centre adjacent to their laboratories.

They have also shaken up the usual system of appointments. Instead of the usual divide between short-term post-docs and tenured academics, everyone is on a contract in those first years.

These are just some ideas. We need others.

We need different ways of measuring success in the research system that aren't based on one kind of career path followed by a narrow population.

We need different expectations in the wider workplace.²

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I have spoken so far about those early years.

And ensuring careers don't get stuck in quicksand once children come along.

Now I want to shift the focus of my comments to the other end of the age spectrum.

Because we also need to keep women in work through their 50s and 60s.

There are a lot of issues in the mix for older workers:

The population is ageing and we can no longer afford to have people retiring at 55 or 60. Australians need to work longer.

This is a good thing. In my experience, this is when I have seen women's careers accelerate. This allows us to expand that cohort of senior female role models and leaders.

I also think that as we look for ways to address our skills shortage, we should remember that older workers with STEM skills are a valuable pool that we can draw from. This is especially pertinent at the moment given the restrictions on overseas arrivals.

But there are barriers.

One of these is age discrimination, and I know the Age Discrimination Commissioner has been doing some important work in this space.

For women, there is an added layer, and that is the issue of menopause. Yes you heard me right!

I want to talk a bit about that today, because the system doesn't always support this phase of women's lives.

Unless we find ways to better support women during menopause, we risk losing the skills and leadership of women in their 40s and 50s.

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Menopause is not discussed enough. I know I wouldn't have felt comfortable talking publicly about it when I went through the experience myself some years ago.

² <https://rsph.anu.edu.au/news-events/news/why-men-need-work-%E2%80%AFwoman>

It's not as though it's a small group. Half the population goes through menopause. And it's not a moment in time – it's a process that takes some years.

But there is surprisingly little research relating to the impact of menopause on women's careers in Australia. Which probably reflects the fact that it has not had enough focus or visibility.

In the UK, there's a strong focus.

The British Parliament started an inquiry this year - noting that more than one million women in the UK have left their jobs because of symptoms.³

This is just at the point in their careers when they should be in senior positions - the trailblazers and role models for younger people.⁴

A growing number of women in the UK are launching employment discrimination cases as a result of menopause.^{5 6}

The British Medical Association reports that female Drs are reluctant to speak about their own experiences for fear of damaging careers, being ridiculed or making things worse in male-dominated workplaces.⁷

Women often avoid speaking to managers about their symptoms because managers are men or they're younger.⁸

We can be sure these same things are happening in Australia, and women are leaving work because of it.

I don't know to what extent.

But I do know that we have to do everything we can to keep women supported and productive at work through their 50s and into their 60s.⁹

This means being aware of the challenges that can arise from menopause, and considering ways to ameliorate them.

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This is a matter of equity – we all know about the superannuation disparity when women have interrupted careers or leave work earlier.

³ Over an undefined period: <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/1416/menopause-and-the-workplace/>

⁴ <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/328/women-and-equalities-committee/news/156760/an-invisible-cohort-why-are-workplaces-failing-women-going-through-menopause/>

⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/aug/07/menopause-centre-increasing-number-uk-employment-tribunals>

⁶ 1132 women experiencing menopause or perimenopause surveyed in 2019 - more than 90% said menopause or perimenopause was affecting their performance at work; one-third had considered quitting their job or refusing their hours <https://www.newsonhealth.co.uk/news/menopause-at-work-survey-results-published>

⁷ <https://www.bma.org.uk/media/2913/bma-challenging-the-culture-on-menopause-for-working-doctors-report-aug-2020.pdf>

⁸ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23973049/>

⁹ In 2019, 60 per cent of people aged 60 to 64 were in work - up from just a third in 1999. This is a really significant shift. From 33 per cent to 60 per cent in 20 years. That's for people aged 60 to 64. <https://humanrights.gov.au/about/news/speeches/ageism-and-countering-effects-covid-19-older-australians-work>⁹

It is also a question of ensuring we have that pool of senior female role models and leaders.

And it is about our nation's future and our nation's prosperity.

The last thing we want to do is make skilled researchers, scientists and engineers feel the workforce has no place for them in those final decades of their careers.

Australia has lost a stream of skilled migration as a result of COVID.

It takes time to get a pipeline of skilled workers in new industries through the education system, trained up and ready.

The older workforce provides one of the solutions and we should be using it.

On this note, I was really pleased to see the launch of the Stem Returners program in Australia. This is about encouraging highly skilled people with STEM backgrounds back into the workforce after a career break, and linking them with jobs, as well as mentoring through Engineers Australia.

It starts with 12 weeks, then if the fit is right, the jobs can become permanent.

This looks like an excellent program for both sides of the equation – providing a pathway back into the workforce for skilled workers, and a talent pool for industry sectors facing skills shortages.

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I have talked a lot so far about the problems – those patches of quicksand where careers can get really stuck.

It's easy to see those negatives given what sometimes feels like such a glacial pace of change and the discussions we are having in Australia at the moment are a reflection of that.

And then we see the stories and pictures from Afghanistan. When women risk their lives just to speak out, or argue for an education, or even the right to leave their homes alone. It can feel like progress is just far too slow.

But then I cast my mind back to when I was a child in the 1960s and realise how far we have come in my lifetime, at least here in Australia.

When my mother had children she had to leave her job - that was the rule where she worked at the NSW Railways.

Helen Williams recalled being asked to "play mother" when the tea trolley arrived during a Treasury gathering in the 1970s¹⁰.

When she was promoted into the SES in 1979, there was resistance.

¹⁰ <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/newly-honoured-aps-trailblazer-helen-williams-defied-stereotypes-20190124-p50tfg.html>

After her appointment as Education Secretary, it was 17 years – seventeen years - before another woman came to head a department.

But the landscape changed during her career as it did for me and it is no longer unusual to have a female Secretary.

Most recently, Katherine Jones has just taken up her appointment as the first female Secretary of the Attorney-General's Department in its 120 year history! That's a milestone.

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Women are also making their mark in science.

Anyone who saw the spontaneous standing ovation at Wimbledon for the scientists behind vaccine development probably shares my feeling that this was quite an emotional moment.

It was important recognition of the work of Dame Sarah Gilbert, but also of all the researchers and scientists who have played such a key role in the pandemic response. It was a real demonstration of public trust in science – and it bodes well.

I'm not going to measure progress by Barbie characters, but I couldn't help but smile when I saw that Barbie – yes even Barbie! – now has a new series of female professors and Drs on the frontline of the COVID pandemic.

There's an Australian Dr in the group, a doll based on Bendigo GP Kirby White. She is a GP who raised money to make reusable gowns for Drs when supplies ran low last year.

I know it's Barbie with all of the Barbie baggage.

But with our understanding that role modelling is so important, I welcome this.

I referred earlier to the under-representation of women studying STEM subjects in the physical sciences.

But despite the low numbers, women are making their mark in some subjects that have been considered male bastions.

In 2020, women won the Nobel Prizes for both physics and chemistry.

In Australia we have women heading the Australian Research Council, and the National Health and Medical Research Council - our two main research funding bodies. The new CSIRO Chief Scientist is a woman. The Defence Chief Scientist is a woman.

So yes, change is slow. But there is momentum. Having women in these really senior positions is normalising.

One of the challenges female leaders face is the feeling that perhaps they shouldn't really be there – a kind of imposter syndrome.

But it is time to take imposter syndrome off the list of things to worry about.

This is the time to stand confidently and lead by example to inspire and advance the careers of women who come behind us.

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I started by talking about my identity as a scientist first.

This is the lens through which I view my leadership role and through which I can encourage new ways of thinking.

Navigating these unprecedented times has seen the elevation of science in the public sphere.

It's great that we scientists are being called on to help address some of Australia's greatest challenges. And that the role of scientists is being recognised in our future prosperity – as we look to accelerate new low-emissions industries, address climate change, launch a space industry, boost medical manufacturing, embrace the incredible new digital tools and quantum technologies.

But science alone cannot solve the challenges.

We need what I call "Science Plus".

Solutions to the challenges we face need science plus engineering, science plus design, a business case, the right regulation and social licence.

Bringing together all of these pieces of the puzzle is the way to achieve real-world impact.

This is about different disciplines but it's also about different ways of thinking.

We need engineers, experts in business, marketing and communications experts, ethicists and people with the capacity to think in nuanced ways about safety and community acceptance.

This is the thought I want to leave you with today.

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I strongly believe that we won't achieve what we need to as a nation unless we take that diversity message to heart.

It is easy to fall into the fallacy of the average.

The assumption that by catering for the average, society is doing its job.

It's like imagining that the bell of the bell curve is the only game. And forgetting that five out of every 100 people are not part of the great bulk in the middle.

They fit into the tails at the ends of the bell curve for any given parameter.

The thing to remember is that these five in 100 are still part of the normal distribution.

Science is more than Eureka moments. It is about insight. It is about striving for excellence.

We have breakthroughs when we look for new ways to apply our knowledge, or new ways of thinking about complex problems.

When we take risks.

And when we use all of our human potential in everything we do.

Recognising and embracing difference is how we add depth and richness to our decision-making.

My approach is Science Plus.

I ask you, as leaders, to think about how you will broaden your approach to unlock the full human potential in your sectors.

As we navigate the 'new normal' of our working environment how will you shape it for the better? When you're thinking about issues that impact specific groups, how will you involve the whole workforce in the solution?

Parental leave, for example, is not only an issue for women. Likewise, part-time work and how that impacts advancement is not only an issue for women. It might disproportionately impact women. But colleagues and supervisors all need to share in the solution. The same applies to menopause, and to older workers more broadly.

Across the Public Service, you are the facilitators of change.

Where you have a seat at the table, use it to invite others in. Thank you!

HELEN SULLIVAN: Thank you so much Dr Foley. There was so much in there in that wonderful oration and I have to say personally, I'm delighted that you picked up on the issue of menopause. This is something that many of us, as you indicated experience and is certainly something that that I've been as candid as I can be with my colleagues about, and I think that being straightforward about it is really, really important.

Thank you for that, along with everything else in that wonderful oration. We now have some questions submitted by the audience and these will be live streamed and then once the question has been asked, will go back to you for a response.

KATRINA BAXENDALE:

Hi my name is Katrina Baxendale and I'm an acting director at the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment. Dr Foley, initial studies and statistics are showing that during the pandemic, more women are taking on home-schooling responsibilities than men. This often has a negative impact on their productivity at work.

Do you think that this has or will have an effect on the progression of women careers?

DR CATHY FOLEY: So that's a great question, and it's a really important one to ask, and I think for all of us who are on, you know, on the call today, it's actually up to us to make sure it doesn't happen.

I think the pandemic has taken its toll on everyone's ability at work, and we do know that women and there's evidence to say, have taken the lions share of domestic childcare.

But I think we have to think about you, know how we can make sure that we don't make assumptions about our women's careers? That we don't answer for them, thinking that they've got something that is stopping them from taking up an opportunity that we actually allow, you know, particularly the chance to act and step up when often you think they might have too much on their hands. If the opportunities there actually ask them.

But I think the other one is also making sure that we understand how we measure success. As I mentioned, this is an area that I think really needs urgent attention at something which I understand is pervasive across a whole lot of areas. But in the research sector in particular, what we're seeing is a very narrow idea of what this would look like, which has been pretty much based on, you know, a construct of probably men working, and often from an Anglo background and that is fine for the past, but we've now got such a broader range of people working that it doesn't necessarily mean that we are able to embrace that full human potential and measure it in a way and applaud it and to and to celebrate, you know, the successes that are there, but they're often hidden. You know, quite often as volume rather than quality, or some experience sort of a particular type of experience that doesn't take into account other experiences that are equal and valid and just as effective.

So I think in many ways, if we're able to manage that, a rethink of the structure on success parameters or a criteria for how we look at 'what does good look like?', that on all aspects, I think we'll see a big change there.

HELEN SULLIVAN Thanks so much. I'm going to read the second question that that we have which is deals with something that you've addressed in part in the oration - that's to do with working mothers career trajectory's and what risk there is to those given that it's women who tend to drop out of the workforce when childcare becomes unaffordable.

DR CATHY FOLEY Yeah, so that's a real issue. It's also about taking time off and working part time and also actually at the other end it reflects on a pair of parents or grandparents. They seemed to step in to take on child caring as well, which means that they're out of the workforce too. So it was so nobody wins over, but I think we have to make sure that

we actually embrace the whole. The whole idea of flexibility. I know that if you look at places that have really, you know, sort of recognized that you know (I mean, my kids are all in their 20s and 30s now) and I know that time when you had to struggle with childcare before and after school care or that sort of stuff is just part of your whole career. And I think what we're not doing well is a couple of things.

One is making it OK for everyone or parents to be able to do what's necessary to juggle. We know it's an important part of our humanity that we actually have children and that we are also able to work and we work out how to make that all come together and I think it's that normalizing that this is just the way work is. It's not different, it's special. That's how work is not. It's changing and I think it's great to see that happening, but we've got a long way to go. I know in the academic world we've still got, uh, (just hearing from those young women who I spoke to earlier this year) there is such a spectrum, and I know we've got that SAGE program underway, and we've seen some research organisations getting their bronze. But that's just the plan.

What we want to see is that plan turning to action and that's when we're really going to start seeing something happen and a really simple thing, which I think the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute did this, was they actually moved a reference to women. Everything is just our staff, so anything to do with our policies. So that then things to do with parental leave was just about as equal for men as it is for women and I think it's fantastic to see, men, our young men, with their young families, also willing to step out and be able to take their chance to engage with their kids and take time off work and also go part time and a whole range of things like that. So I think we're in transition, but we're going to make sure we set up the structures around it that we actually recognize that got to play the long game that we've got the resourcing for success on all these things and it's not just a problem for a particular subsection, it's actually part of the way work is done.

HELEN SULLIVAN Thank you so much. I will go to the next question now.

JUSTINE MCNICOL Good afternoon Dr Foley, Justine McNicol from People, Culture and Capability Branch at the Department of Education, Skills and Employment. My question for you today is: what would be your advice to both government policymakers and the public service as responsible for implementing policies to achieve positive change for older workers? Thank you.

DR CATHY FOLEY Yeah, that's a great question and Justine and it's not just because I'm getting old too. This is something which actually has always interested me. This whole end of career, and there's a couple of things - (and I don't have the solutions) I think these are just things where I think we are just beginning to have the discussion and talking about is the first thing we have sort of spent a lot of time focusing on early careers and that tricky time of, you know, when you're having fun, creating a family and getting your career on track. But at the end of a new career we do get a bit tired, you know, bodies don't work as well as they used to.

There's also things like the golden handcuffs I think of superannuation so that when you do eventually retire, how do we actually make sure that we're, you know,

maximizing I guess, our financial stability? because that's really important. And also, as I mentioned before too, you know there's this growing trend -they have the expectation of Granny and Grandpa to be part of the child care plan for families. I think where you know the idea of thinking about that and putting effort into what does end of career look like, how we actually plan for it? What do we actually have to do to restructure things in a way that allows us to go into part time and transition out without it impacting on your superannuation or being able to have ways where you can step down or aside to let the next generation come in, (particularly when you're in a leadership role), without you actually having to have something which will impact on you financially, or you know whatever it is it takes to make sure your self esteem and self worth is there because you know by the end of your careers you probably got a lot of your identity based on what your job has been. So there's a whole lot of stuff there which is there for the thinking about and an opportunity for us to really think about what needs to change, but I think it comes down to flexibility and working and recognition that at all stages in your life there's going to be different, different bits that you have to take into account and that that model of the way work is done. And I think COVID has sort of woken us up to this, that you can work productively in weird and wonderful circumstances. That you can approach your work in a different way and still be effective and have impact and deliver on whatever your role is. I think this is the opening and just the beginning of a new way of thinking about how we can embrace flexibility. Look at that whole planning from, you know, sort of cradle to grave I guess of 'what does work mean?' and think about what we need to change in structures that have been there a long time and have been set up at a time when I guess society was different and think what do we have to do to revision work in Australia?

HELEN SULLIVAN Thank you and linked to that, but taking you more into the organization as opposed to the policy settings - Do you have any advice for organisations aiming to get the best out of older workers in other things that you think you've seen that work particularly well and indeed are there particular mistakes that we should be trying to avoid?

DR CATHY FOLEY Yeah, that's so there's a couple of things where I think on average we do it really badly everywhere. No offense for everyone, but, (and as someone who's been in a leadership role management role) is something which really concerned me because, you know older workers are also more expensive and so that comes with that and I think there's also this idea. Two of those constraints I've talked about before, but if you look at places you know the USA actually has a lot more older people working in senior roles or working until much later ages than we have in Australia. The academic community has a more emeritus role where you're able to engage, do mentoring and leadership that way. And we were looking at those people actually working, particularly looking at that skills gap are being able to move in and out of work, micro credentialing, setting up ways to be able to bring your skills up to scratch. And also, I think understanding what the limitations are for. It's almost like you sort of hit your career maximum. Then what does that sort of?

I don't want to say to K, but that time of where you're not necessarily at your sharp first is you know, what does that look like? What are the things we need as from a human health perspective, from king our brains going so that we, you know, sort of? They

keep as agile as possible. There's a lot of things there which I think are there for us to understand and study you consider.

HELEN SULLIVAN

Thank you so much. That's really, really helpful. And yes, very good to know that we're all doing it badly, but we have opportunities to do it better. And that's really great.

So with that I'd like to draw the session to a close and offer our thanks to you Dr Foley for a really great, terrific, stimulating, provocative oration and for taking questions from the audience and sharing your reflections. And I'm told that IPAA ACT has sent a gift to both you and to Helen Williams to express our gratitude for your contribution. And that just personally for me I, as I said earlier, I think the emphasis that you've placed on older workers and certainly on being explicit about what happens in the menopause, how that affects women at work and what we as female leaders can do about that. I think this is really important and very welcome. And if you're talking about it, I think that means that many more people are going to feel able to talk about it. In particular you're focused on what you called Science Plus, I think is absolutely spot on and is something that we can all take away and think about. You know what's the plus for all of us in our in our workplaces, in our industries and professions, and that I think is absolutely the right way to be thinking about the future. And of course, none of us know how the future is going to play out, and the long term consequences of COVID. I think your oration has given us some really helpful pointers to where we need to be looking and what we need to continue building.

So that takes us to the conclusion of this year's Helen Williams Oration. I'd like again to express my gratitude to Helen for her exemplification of women in leadership and to Dr Foley for presenting an excellent 2021 Helen Williams Oration. I'd also like to thank the IPAA partners for their ongoing support. Minter Ellison of course, KPMG, Hayes, Telstra, the Commonwealth Bank of Australia and Microsoft. Thank you to you all for tuning in today and on behalf of IPAA ACT, we look forward to seeing you at future events. Thank you.