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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP:

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY BREAKFAST

SENATOR THE HON MARISE PAYNE

AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT HOUSE

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Frances Adamson: Each year, International Women's Day is an occasion to come together to acknowledge the political, economic, and social achievements of women. It's a time to reflect on progress made, celebrate women's contributions and call for continued change across the globe. At the department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, we promote Australia's strong commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls both domestically and internationally, because sometimes it takes decades for meaningful change to occur, including in the Australian Public Service. From the marriage bar being lifted in 1966 to the first gender balanced Defence graduate cohort in 1985 when I joined, to a gender balance Secretary's Board in 2018. Much has been achieved and there is still a lot to do.

International Women's Day is an opportunity for us to promote the importance of gender equality in the Australian Public Service and commit to ensuring that the diversity of the APS reflects the diversity of the community we serve.

Senator, the honourable Marise Payne has represented New South Wales since 1997. She was a member of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence, and Trade for 12 years. She's a former Minister for Human Services, and I note by the way, that the first female appointed to this role was Margaret Gilfoyle as Minister for Social Security in the Fraser government of 1975. Senator Payne was appointed Australia's first female Minister for Defence by Prime Minister Turnbull in 2015 and self-evidently is the first woman to have served as Minister for Defence and now Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Now, yesterday I was in my office, as I often am always with Sky on, mostly silently in the background, and I looked up to see, my minister smiling broadly. Now ministers normally, obviously foreign ministers are obliged to look pleasant, unless they're looking particularly stern and regrettably that's required on the all too frequent occasions as well. But that made me pick up my remote and press the mute button, and what I heard actually, I instantly understood because Marise Payne is a proud resident of Penrith or very near Penrith, an active advocate and energetic champion of western Sydney. And what she was doing actually, she was standing with a PM and a number of other ministers and making an announcement there had a little bit to do with rowing, and those of you who know me well would know that, that would make me happy as well too, but it was looking at the timing of the presser, and the timing of the issuing of a media release shortly afterwards, I think the minister was looking really happy because she, other ministers and the prime minister had announced that the western Sydney airport was going to be named after Nancy Bird Walton, Australia's greatest female aviation pioneer. And that is grounds, I think for all of us to be smiling broadly.

Now Minister, in you Australia has a foreign minister who brings deep authority and experience to the major foreign policy and security issues of our time. Few people are as well qualified to speak on women in peace and security and women in leadership. Please join me in welcoming Marise.

Marise Payne:

Frances, thank you very much for your very kind introduction this morning and your tenacity in ensuring that I made it here today. I suspect at some stage during the morning tree confessions may result in me describing how I actually got here. But, it is very kind of you to have asked me to address this morning's breakfast and I particularly wanted to thank you for your very special acknowledgement of country in language. I know that is very meaningful to traditional owners. So I also extend my acknowledgement to traditional owners of the land on which we meet and pay my respects to elders past and present and emerging. Let me also acknowledge the very many secretaries who are here in the room this morning and thank you for your support and attendance. Also Trish Bergin from the Office Of Women, Drew Baker, the CEO of IPAP, and Kathy Leigh head of the ACT public service. I know that they like I are all very delighted to be here to celebrate and to acknowledge International Women's Day this week.

As I look across this considerable audience, let me also thank you for your attendance at this early morning event. It's fair to say that I'm not sure exactly how many of you I have met across the estimates table over the years, but I think this is a much better environment. Thank you all very much for being here.

Today and International Women's Day and this week of observation and celebration is a really important opportunity to reflect on the progress that we've made in gender equality, to recognise women in leadership in particular and inevitably to acknowledge how much further we have to go. In 2019 however, in many areas, in many ways we have made significant progress in advancing women's rights, but gender equality does remain elusive. We know it remains elusive because the statistics tell us this, and I'm not necessarily one for the rampant use of statistics to the great disappointment of my chartered accountant father, but I do think it's important to take an opportunity like this to place them on the record as a marker of where we are.

Two weeks ago, on the 21st February, the Australian Bureau of Statistics recorded a historic low full-time gender pay gap of 14.2% for women across Australia. It's a notable achievement in itself considering that we've brought it down from 18.7% in November 2014. Last week on the 1st March, a study commissioned by the workplace gender equality agency, however showed a 27% gender pay gap between the highest paid 10% of men and women in CEO and top tier manager roles. It might surprise some to know that there remains a gender pay gap in the public sector. The latest data there shows that there is an 8.4% difference in the average base salary for women compared with that of men in the public service.

The difference is largely due to the difference in gender proportions across the APS classification structure. In general, there are greater numbers of women at lower classifications and greater numbers of men at higher classifications. While brought together those numbers could seem somewhat disheartening. We do need to measure and understand the problem or the issue in order to bring about meaningful change. A key focus of many strategies to address these issues is parity in leadership roles. In the private sector for example, women remain

underrepresented at every stage of the career pipeline with poor representation at the top leadership levels.

In 2018 and he's 17% of CEOs were women, but I am pleased to say in many respects at the public sector is faring better and as Frances has outlined, in 2018 gender parity was achieved at the most senior level of the public sector in Australia. It is correct to say, and I also acknowledged Frances' observation that the leadership of people like Secretary Parkinson has enabled this to come about, but it's also important to say that the leadership of the women who fill those roles has also enabled this to come about.

And of course within my own department, my secretary Frances Adamson is one of those women who also leads the way for other women within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. And within my own portfolio I'm especially conscious of the need for gender equality and for women in leadership because I want Australia to demonstrate through our actions to the world that we champion gender equality at all levels and in every area of our society. I know that under Frances' leadership DFAT has developed initiatives that have driven deep cultural change. We've made considerable progress in normalising flexible and remote work practises and I know the uptake of flexible work particularly by men continues to grow in the department.

In June of last year, foreign affairs and trade portfolio boards reached gender parity with women holding 50.6% of positions. Where we do need to do more is to increase female representation across chair and deputy chair board positions and the senior executive service. We're not alone in this. Across the public service, 44.8% of APS positions are now occupied by women. In DFAT, we sit at 39.5 up from just over 33% in October 2015. In DFAT just over a third of chair and deputy chair positions are currently held by women.

We have seen significant progress with gender parity in half of mission and half of post appointments. Currently women hold a record high of 42% as at 31st December last year and that is a significant increase from 27% in 2015 when DFAT launched its APS gender equality award-winning women in leadership strategy. And I want to acknowledge the leadership of DFAT through that time and also the efforts of my predecessor Julie Bishop in that regard.

In 2018, this government appointed Australia's first Indigenous woman ambassador Julie-Ann Guivarra, who serves as ambassador from Spain. I met with Julie-Ann in Europe last week, which was a special opportunity. To improve these numbers we can, however, each of us take practical steps to address the gaps. We can change how we characterise leadership so that we broaden the net of values and skills. We can reflect and observe our own attitudes and behaviours and how we respond personally to gender inclusion. And while the landscape is changing and the presence of women in leadership is increasing, we can admit that it doesn't necessarily equate to full participation and appreciation of women's contribution. We do need to continue to raise our voices to challenge traditional roles and to notions of hierarchy because without women's voices, we only hear half the story.

Ladies and gentlemen, a clear example of where the engagement of women in non-traditional roles is critical is global peace and security. From my time in the defence role and now in foreign affairs, I know that women's full and meaningful participation is essential to doing more, to prevent conflict and to creating lasting stability after conflict and a disaster. We know that women and girls bear the brunt of conflict and disaster, whether its sexual violence or displacement, economic hardship, withdrawal from education, increased vulnerability to early marriage. The list goes on. Our focus, Australia's focus is on protecting women and girls from these harms, but we do make a fundamental mistake if we only view women and girls through the lens of vulnerability. A core principle for peace and security and all its phases is that women must be an equal part of the solution. In conflict affected communities, in disaster affected communities, women and to girls have views and opinions about how disaster should be addressed or conflict should be resolved, about where resources should be directed, and what needs should be prioritised.

Last year on International Women's Day, I spent my morning at Enoggera Barracks Brisbane. I took part in a round table with some of Defence's leading gender advisors at the time. One of the gender advisors that morning explained to me her interpretation of the term human terrain, because if you're not engaging properly with women, you're not seeing all of the human terrain. How can you be effective in your roles? How can you develop effective policies and practises if you're not fully aware of the terrain in which you're operating.

So engaging women is fundamental to achieving outcomes. A couple of years ago, I remember sitting in Kabul with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani who described this so practically yet so eloquently. Without women in their ranks, the Afghan national defence and security forces can't actually do their job. They can't maintain security across the population. And the example he gave me was so simple, in Afghanistan, in the regions, in rural areas in particular, if a woman is at home alone with her children, a male soldier can't enter the home. So without women in their ranks, the ANDSF can't even engage at that level. He and his wife madam Ghani, are great leaders in this area, in Afghanistan.

The evidence is also clear, back to a few statistics, when women are included in peace processes, there's a 35% greater chance that an agreement will last at least 15 years. Including women at every stage of the peace process is the most effective way to achieve lasting and resilient security. And I reiterated the message, Australia's message last year at the United Nations General Assembly in September in terms of our commitment to the women peace and security agenda. Australia has surpassed the UN benchmark of a minimum of 15% of female military members deployed on Australian peacekeeping missions. We currently sit at 18.3%. Indeed, the newest force commander for the peacekeeping force in Cyprus is Australian Major General Cheryl Pearce, only the second woman ever to lead a UN deployment.

Major General Pearce's appointment means that all top three positions in Cyprus are currently held by women. That's a first in peacekeeping history and led by Australia. Female peacekeepers improve operational effectiveness and to

act as role models in the local environment, their presence and their work, encouraging women and girls in often male dominated societies to seek their own rights and to seek participation in peace processes.

The development of the women peace and security agenda demands a fundamental shift though in how the global community understands and approaches conflict. So to help drive that shift, Australia supports UN agencies responsible for women peace, security and protection concerns, including in particular UN women. And we take our role as a leading supporter very seriously. During my time as defence minister, we were instrumental in the secondment of the first female ADF officer as the Women, Peace and Security Advisor to UN women. That position was first filled in 2017 by Commander Jen Wittwer. It's currently filled by Lieutenant Jim Orchard. An important signal that men are key allies and advocates on women, peace and security.

This secondment helps to ensure Australia is in a position to shape, influence and importantly learn from others in this area. However, despite this growing recognition of women's value, they still constitute only 3% of peacekeepers and still don't feel enough senior defence leadership positions, including frankly in the ADF.

Over the time that I was Australia's defence minister, I met some extraordinary serving members. But this morning, it's appropriate to acknowledge the extraordinary serving women and serving female leaders in the ADF who are role models, who are true leaders whose dedication and service shows others what is possible. In this room they might be many, but I can see Kathryn Campbell, CSC, AO and acknowledge her service and leadership. Major General Campbell is one of those leaders. But the numbers are numbers that we need to change.

More broadly, women are still underrepresented in national security positions and Francis and I know that only two well from some of the small and intimate regular meetings we go to together. But this is an international conversation. It's a conversation across disciplines, within national security, across portfolios, and frankly across countries.

On two of the last occasions that I've had the opportunity to visit Washington, our ambassador in Washington, my good friend Joe Hockey has drawn together leading women from the national security cohort in Washington to a function at his home to engage, to discuss, to talk, to compare notes about administrations and governments and social media and things like that. To talk about the role of women in national security. He's done that twice. It's a large group, but given the size of the national security enterprise in Washington, it's smaller than you might think, but it's a very important undertaking for Australia to put our interest in women in national security on the map that way, led by our ambassador in Washington. In terms of the international conversation, I caught up a short time ago with a former defence minister, colleague of mine who reported to me that, there's one new defence minister elsewhere in the group in Europe who is a former serving major general in his own military, who on meeting my friend acknowledged her as a defence minister of her country and

asked her how difficult it was to do her job given she couldn't possibly know anything, to her face, in two languages. Very special.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm a believer in the phrase, if you can't see it, you can't be it. And one of the reasons I really believe in that phrase is because I've actually seen it in action. Not all women in leadership necessarily see themselves as any different to their male peers. Why would they? Why should they? They don't need to. But just by being in those roles, they are so often important role models for others to show what is possible. I also have very pragmatic reasons for wanting to see more women involved in our national security community. Quite simply in my view, it produces better outcomes. It allows us to draw on a broader range of lived experiences, supports the contest of ideas and assumptions, and it brings a greater range of skills to the work of diplomacy, of security and of development. But having women present at the table is not the simple answer. It's also about meaningful participation, which is vital about the valuing of the voices of women around that table and the listening, not just across the public sector of course, but in all workplaces.

Last year to reinforce this, the government delivered the landmark inaugural women's economic security statement. Commitments to secure financial independence for women and to boost their employability and their entrepreneurship opportunities. In Australia since September 2013 more than 1.2 million jobs have been created in this country by business with the support of the economic strategies of this government.

The majority of those jobs, 56% have been taken up by women. More women, and increased participation means better outcomes for our society. Regardless of the stage that we stand on, I think we all have a unique role in shaping Australia's gender equality and to diversity and in contributing to global growth to peace and to security. We've come a long way on gender equality and women are becoming more visible in leadership roles. I salute those women. I thank them all. I thank you all for your support of that advance, but we need to continue to work together to create that inclusive world where women are empowered, where women feel safe, where women are equal and respected leaders. I think that I am probably running out of time, but I'd like to come back to say if I can tweak one of Frances questions on that matter.

Thank you very much ladies and gentlemen, for the opportunity to speak this morning. Can I congratulate you on what you do on the service that you give in your public service and wish you all the very best for your careers today and beyond. The only way is up. Thank you.

Frances Adamson: Thanks very much indeed minister. You gave us a bit to think about obviously, and that's really what we wanted to achieve this morning. I have to say though, your comment about, intimate meetings, small numbers of people around the table and it does matter to us I think. Obviously by definition we've never been there when there are no women in the room. But I know that that has been the case.

Marise Payne: I think it has happened though.

Frances Adamson: I have been the only woman at that table from time to time, including when Julie Bishop was overseas and you were overseas as defence minister. And I have to say it was quite a different feeling. To some respects it's a lot more fun even though the topics are always serious when you're there when some of my female colleagues or when Rosemary Huxtable was there as a Secretary of the Department of Finance and some of our other colleagues in the national security community there are many very, very capable women often in deputy roles and they'll be there on an acting basis.

I just want to say, I mean, not many people get to sort of see into those rooms and see behind those doors, but I did notice only a few weeks ago that the secretary's committee on national security for the first time ever, I think, there were equal numbers of men and women. And it was in tone and I think, to some extent in substance also a different conversation. So I just wanted to pick up on that point.

Now, you know, minister that the APS is in something of a period of transition and that David Thodey and his independent review, looking at how we might position ourselves better for the future, including out to 2030, they will report after the election. I don't ask you to comment necessarily on how we can better position ourselves as a service, but if you look at women in the service, how can we better position women to take on leadership roles in the future service out to 2030?

Marise Payne: I'm hoping to see David Thodey quite soon myself, so I need to make sure that happens. But Frances, I think it's a good question. In 2019, I think contemporary leadership is about ensuring that there are pathways, about ensuring that where necessary there are mentoring roles in place. I met yesterday with the Chief Magistrate of the Solomon Islands, a woman by the name of Emma Garo, who is a really impressive legal officer, a really impressive legal officer. In fact, secretary moderators may wish to poach her for something sometimes, but she was talking to me about mentoring in particular and the value that she gained as a lawyer in the Solomon Islands reaching a very senior level for a female lawyer in that environment from mentoring by Ramsey lawyers. Ramsey defence lawyers, Ramsey foreign affairs lawyers, IGs, IFP, she actually sees a qualitative difference in her effort to do her job, because of that mentoring, which she thinks is lacking in the generations coming behind her.

So I do think, and I have personally benefited over the years from strong mentors, I do think there's an important role for that. And pathways, making sure that when individuals and cohorts are identified that they're not just identified and admired from a distance, but that there is actually a path attached to their development and their progress.

Frances Adamson: Well, thank you for that. Now I could sit here all morning and ask questions, but I'm going to give up that opportunity because you and I have a fair bit of time together and instead I'm going to throw to IPAA's future leaders table. Of course

the theme or one of the themes for this year's International Women's Day is, more powerful together. I honestly don't know whether they're going to pick up that thing, but I'm going to throw the opportunity for a swag of questions to the IPAA leaders table. It's entirely in your hands young leaders, over to you.

Marise Payne: Hashtag no pressure.

Dani: Good Morning Minister and thank you for your keynote address this morning. My name is Dani Distefano and I work in the Department of Home Affairs. So you were the first female federal president of the young liberals and the first female defence minister in Australia. In many ways you've helped pave the way for women in politics in Australia. On appointment as defence minister, you are asked that you be judged on your performance and not your gender. I'm interested in hearing more about your experience at the helm of a traditionally male dominated portfolio and any advice you may have for other women aspiring towards leadership in portfolios or industries with similar gender compositions.

Marise Payne: So when I said Hashtag no pressure, I know Greg Moriarty is in the room. I can't tell all the stories. I really can't tell all the stories, but Dani, thank you for your question.

It was certainly an interesting experience of both for me and I think possibly for the Defence Organisation, uniformed and public service, to have a new minister, but this new minister in particular. A new experience in a number of ways, not least of which was that as Frances said. I'd spent a long time in the parliament engaged in the committee structure that oversaw defence in the ADF foreign affairs over very many years. So, if nothing else, I had some small insight into the department itself. But it is of course, enormously large, enormously large.

I did think when I was the minister of Human Services working with my then Secretary Kathryn Campbell, that we had a big job. There are 35,000 staff, give or take 400 locations in the Department of Human Services. But when you flip the switch from that to 80,000 people and 400 locations, including around the world, including conflict, it ramps it up exponentially. I never felt under supported or not supported by the APS, and the defence structure under me. Never, ever. Occasionally bemused by what they did but never not supported. I think that is a really important thing to reinforce. The professionalism of the Australian public sector manifested for me through now three departments, is I think, exceptional. I think it is overwhelmingly rigorous and overwhelmingly delivers for its leaders. It's not to say that we always agree with each other. It's not to say that it's perfect, but I've seen examples elsewhere of less than perfect. So I do know the difference and I appreciate that very much.

In terms of the significant male dominance of the organisation, both, more in uniform than in the public sector, obviously. I think it was remarkable for a moment and then not. You just get on with it.

Frances Adamson: Well as Caroline Miller said to me earlier today, a DFAT colleague now at PM&C. When she joined the public service in 1983 the year before the passage of the sex discrimination act, it would have been unthinkable that there would be a gathering such as this today.

Marise Payne: Yes.

Frances Adamson: Some things are remarkable and-

Marise Payne: You are all a revolution. You must understand it. To the barricades.

Frances Adamson: Next question from Kate Penney

Kate Penney: Thank you minister, I'm Kate Penney from the Treasury. I wonder if you could tell us about a time when you had to face a challenge or overcome a barrier as a leader. It would be great to hear a great example that you've been through, and your reflections on how that's affected your approach to leadership?

Frances Adamson: You mean aside from getting up at 4:00 AM this morning to get here

Marise Payne: 3:30 actually but who's counting? Thank you Kate. So I've been in parliament for a long time as Frances pointed out. And when I came to the parliament, I was in my very early 30s. And I think there was a presumption at the time in the Howard government, that the challenge for development and promotion would be around gender, but in fact it was not, it was around age. I couldn't do anything about either of them as it happened. Well, I suppose I could as an extremist option. So, it was interesting with people saying, it must be really hard to be a woman and waiting for your turn. And it came to me after a relatively short period of time in that government, or I came to the conclusion that really age was more of an issue, that there were a lot of long serving men particularly ahead of me in that path. And there was an expectation of combination of things, marriage appointments, time served, reward for effort and things like that, which means that 30 something young women were not in that pipeline at all.

Then there was the fact that I was rather regarded as somewhat of a rebel as well, that probably didn't help, but, it was more about age than gender, so overcoming it took time, but it was extraordinarily valuable in teaching me the importance of patience and tenacity and staying. That's why I like to breed staying race horses. It's a very, very powerful metaphor for me actually. But patience is not a virtue I came to parliament with. Let me tell you, and took me a long time to learn it, but it was worth it in the end.

Frances Adamson: Thank you. I think one more, this might be in the last.

Steph McLennan: Thank you minister. My name's Steph McLennan and I'm at Geoscience Australia. Picking up on the thing-

Marise Payne: I Love Geosciences.

Steph McLennan: So do I. Just picking up on a theme that Dani raised, but you've been leading the way in portfolios dominated by men, both domestically and internationally. And I'm curious how you found navigating that imbalance, particularly on the international stage and what do you think will be different for the next generation of aspiring female leaders?

Marise Payne: Well let me start at the end because I hope lots will be different... lots. I hope that in 10 years' time, a breakfast of this nature is celebrating significant changes in those statistics that I put on the record today in 2019. I hope that in 10 years' time my niece who's doing her high school certificate this year, we'll be in a workplace, in a workforce that does not have gender related issues to struggle through for young women. I'm ever an optimist.

In terms though of your question about the international environment, here's an interesting observation. I think the first meeting I attended as defence minister in Europe of the international global coalition against the Dutch, which was convened by Barrack Obama's defence secretary Ash Carter, and the current French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, then was the French defence minister. When I walked into that room and met Roberta Pinotti who was the Italian defence minister, Ursula von der Leyen who was the German defence minister and still is. María Dolores de Cospedal who was the Spanish defence minister at the time, and I turned up, in fact, there was an air of, where did they all come from? Literally. The Straits ... Not the Straits Times, one of the Middle Eastern papers took a photograph of the four or five of us at the hotel in Paris for this particular meeting and put it on the front page because it was so remarkable in Europe, and in the Middle East. Put it on the front page to say, "Look at this. What a curiosity this is."

Three years later, still in that role in NATO meetings there were more and more and more. So that international scenario had changed over time in a good way and in an important way. So, I think maintaining the pace is the challenge. Maintaining the pace and making sure that the contributions of those women are recognised. If you think about what they were doing, what Italy was doing, where it had troops deployed in the global coalition against Asia at the time, what Germany was doing, what they were deploying in global coalition against Asia at the time. These were serious, tough, difficult issues of security and conflict management and dealing with violent extremist organisations and the worst of terrorism. Making sure their contributions are recognised and those who following their footsteps, have an opportunity to continue that good work is really important.

Frances Adamson: So it is. Minister, I'm going to invite Trish Bergin, Head of the Office for Women.

Marise Payne: While Trish comes up, I cannot resist a captive audience like this, and I figure, "Hey, I'm the minister. It's my prerogative to do an ad". When I was the Secretary of Human Services and working with Kathryn Campbell, we introduced a blueprint for addressing family and domestic violence in the department of Human Services, which I understand from my friend and colleague, Minister Keenan, still exists. It's called "Enough". It was a really significant effort by the

Department of Human Services at the time, which was well placed because of the nature of its workforce, the largest employer of social workers in the country, just for starters. But well placed to acknowledge that family and domestic violence occurs everywhere. Everywhere. It occurs in every department of the Commonwealth and in every State Department in Australia.

It occurs in our posts submissions overseas, it occurs in the ADF, it occurs in every cohort, but it takes a lot to actually contemplate how you might start to address it. And we did in Human Services. And the *Enough* programme is about supporting staff who are experiencing family and domestic violence and frankly including as perpetrators and also in supporting customers, clients of the Department of Human Services who might come to us in times of extraordinary difficulty in their life and not have anywhere else to go.

There are really simple things that the public sector can do to change the way you support your staff. And the template exists in human services. *Enough* exists in human services. And in my view, it's time we say enough for family and domestic violence and let's roll it out across the Commonwealth. It's not hard. There's a lot of secretaries in the room today, and I'm throwing out a challenge because Renee Leone and her team and work that has been done before is there for you to take up. So I'm going to publicly asked Frances to do it right here and right now.

Frances Adamson: We are already doing something very similar-

Marise Payne: You are?

Frances Adamson: But we will have a look at *Enough* and see if there's things we can learn from it.

Marise Payne: There is a template. So if there's not work being done, we can do more and I think we can do it internationally as well. So, that's my ED.

Frances Adamson: Excellent. Thank you.

Trish Bergin: Well, thank you so much for such an engaging discussion. It was tremendous, and in particular, I really loved the discussion about women, peace and security in the office for Women, we're certainly working very hard on that agenda and developing the next national action plan with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Department of Defence. Tremendously, it's wonderful to hear you talk about that.

You should see what this looks like from up here. It is absolutely just so alive. It's huge. It's just so exciting to see so many people come out and want to celebrate International Women's Day. Thank you, Frances, for the work that you do as the IPAA, ACT President and the first female Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

You've provided a great role model to so many women across the public sector of what they can achieve and the difference that they can make. One of the

many tasks at the Office for Women is the monitoring of that gender balance on government boards. And I'd certainly commend the work that you, as well as Minister Payne and previously Julie Bishop, finishing the end of last financial year is one of the leading lots in terms of gender diversity on boards with 50.6%, as you noted, of women represented on defect boards.

I'd also like to thank you for yet again, putting together a wonderful event, especially to all the people who work tirelessly behind the scenes to make this happen. This year's theme, more powerful together, really recognises the important role that everyone in our society, women, men and gender diverse people all play. It's not just a day for celebrating the achievements of women, but also to promote gender equality and acknowledge the ongoing work by reformers and their allies but those who are working daily to empower others and surface the biases and the stereotypes that unfairly hold people back. It reminds me of a time many years ago, many, many. When I returned to work after having my third child as a then band one in the Department of Finance, my secretary asked me what I needed to do to be able to manage a busy budget job and three children under five. Jokingly, I said, "I'd like to work part-time. Nine to five would be great."

He then said, "Why couldn't we help you to do that?" To cut a long story short, I ended up working five days a week, 8:00 til 3:00 PM. And since this was way back in the mid-90s and it was a very unusual thing. Apparently, I was only the second SES officer to work part-time. Apparently once you were in the SES there was just you know.... you have to understand; these jobs are not for part-time work.

What we did was we had a second, really experienced EL2 to manager who stepped in for the other days and was a deputy branch manager and this came with quite a heavy load. At that stage ERC meetings used to run til 11, 12 at night and things like that. And the role that I was in had to be part of that. So what he did, was do the night shift and I'd be in 8:00 AM the next morning to carry on the day shift. So it actually worked really well.

The point of it all is, is that it worked and it worked because of the goodwill of everyone concerned. It worked because the secretary said, how do we make this work rather than why this won't work? But it also worked because my colleague, a male, was also committed to making it work too. The branch who got behind it, and for everyone, it was important that we made it work to demonstrate that it was possible for all. The point is we were more powerful together.

It's everyone's responsibility to ensure we create a world in which girls and women thrive. To do this, we must have equal rights and opportunities through access to education, to feel safe in any environment and to be rewarded for the work that we all do. And we must continue to collaborate and partner together.

To achieve gender equality and we must all understand the issues and the role that we play because we are more powerful together.

Finally, I'd like to formally thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator the honourable Marise Payne for her address today. As we've heard for over 20 years, she has been a leader in our political system serving as a Senator for New South Wales and as a cabinet minister and in her current role representing our country on the world stage. What resonated for me with your speech today, I have to say, was your use of the phrase, the human terrain. I am going to borrow that. I think that's wonderful in terms of making visible or thinking about how ... We're only looking at half the terrain if we're not seeing the women.

Ladies and gentlemen, please put your hands together to thank Minister Payne for her generous and personal insights today. Thank you.