Institute of Public Administration Australia
ACT Division

P 02 6154 9800
PO Box 4349 Kingston ACT 2604
info@act.ipaa.org.au
www.act.ipaa.org.au

ABN 24 656 727 375

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS
WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP | SESSION THREE

The Hon Ros Kelly AO, former Minister
Kathryn Campbell CSC, Secretary of the Department of Social Services
Dr Heather Smith PSM, Secretary of the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science

DFAT DIPLOMATIC ACADEMY

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Cath Ingram: Good afternoon and welcome to the Women in Leadership Series. In preparing just for some very brief introductory comments, I was reflecting on my own journey as a woman and as a leader and how lucky in a way I have been to have grown up and been nurtured in and around government for over 30 years.

Being from the private sector, when I became a partner, it was a fairly lonely place being a woman and whilst our CEO, Gary Wingrove, is hugely committed to gender diversity, in those early days I had to draw on strength from clients and people like the Honourable Ros Kelly who we're going to hear from today.

So, the importance of role models for us as women is something that I think has sat uncomfortably for us, but it's what we actually need to understand what we can achieve, what they have learnt, what they can share, and what a sort of modern, contemporary leadership model looks like through their eyes.

I also think then the importance of storytelling goes very much to transparency. The more that we share and learn, it increases our knowledge, but it actually contributes to trust, and I think that's one of the very big topics of debate whether you're in an institution, the private sector or indeed government.

So in a small way today, our panel and this series and women in leadership, is all about building that trust and establishing our purpose of what we do. So on that note, could I hand over to your Chair today, Suzanne McCourt, whose fine hands you're going to be in and I'm going to settle back and enjoy with you all. Thanks so much.

Suzanne McCourt: Thanks Cath. My name's Suzanne McCourt, I'm the assistant secretary of the Executive branch in DFAT. As well as being responsible for corporate planning, risk management, ministerial support, I'm delighted that the women in leadership secretariat sit in my team and they're a tremendous team of women and men who are working hard to implement our women in leadership strategy right through the department.

So we are absolutely delighted to host this Women in Leadership series, because it absolutely builds on what we are trying to do as department, and it's terrific to see men and women here today to hear from these fabulous women. Without further ado, I'd like to share a little bit more about our speakers.

Dr Heather Smith, a PSM, was appointed the Secretary of the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science in September 2017. She's previously held the positions of Secretary of the Department of Communications and the Arts and Deputy Secretary in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, and I'm delighted to say also DFAT.

Heather was responsible for Innovation Policy and Public Data Policy and headed the Prime Minister's task force on Innovation. In October 2013, she was appointed by Prime Minister Abbott as Australia's G20 Sherpa, a role she held during Australia's presidency. Prior to this Heather had responsibility in the

Department for Economic Industry Infrastructure, Environment and Strategic Policy Matters in her role as Deputy Secretary Economic Strategy.

The Honourable Ros Kelly, AO, has worked across the political, private and not for profit sectors. Ros was a member of the Australian government for 16 years, serving as a Minister in a number of portfolios. She was the first woman AO Cabinet Minister in the House of Representatives, and the first Australian Federal MP to give birth while in office.

The Hon Ros K.: Not literally.

Suzanne McCourt: She went on to serve as Minister assisting the Prime Minister on the status of women. Ros currently serves as an advisor to Women on Boards UK, as a commissioner of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, and the Chair of the Commonwealth War Graves Foundation.

Kathryn Campbell, CSC, is the Secretary of the Department of Social Services, a role she commenced in September 2017. Prior to her current appointment, Kathryn was the Secretary of the Department of Human Services from 2011 to 2017.

Kathryn also held Deputy Secretary positions in the Department of Finance and the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. Please join me in welcoming our speakers. So I think we've agreed between the speakers that Heather would start first.

Dr. Heather S.: Okay, thank you.

Suzanne McCourt: Thank you.

Dr. Heather S.: Thanks very much Suzanne, and thank you to Cath and well done to DFAT and IPAA for this really great series. It's a real honour and a privilege to be here, and certainly to be on this podium with the amazing Ros Kelly and Kathryn Campbell, so it's just terrific.

I thought I'd just share some thoughts on my journey, as previous panellists have done. Then I'd always just like to raise an issue, perhaps for discussion about what is power and what do we think power is in this day and age, and then just end with a few thoughts on what I see as really key leadership attributes going forward.

So I'd probably categorise myself as a transitional female leader. By that I mean I've never really faced the overt barriers that, I guess Ros would've faced many years ago. I cringe when I read and I hear, certainly in the amazing book that Ros had written about her life, some of the experiences that she's had and how much she's actually achieved, just as I cringed when I would listen to Helen Williams talking about her early days coming through the ranks of the public sector.

So I'm part of a generation really where the thanks go to those women before me, because now we have so many leaders who are women and really making a difference. But I think we still have a way to go, and I'll use the terms generally speaking, because once we talk about women and gender and leadership, I think need to be broad.

But I do think that the way that women operate is yet to really resonate in terms of how we think about the exercise of power, and to put it more crudely, do we really see women as being power brokers, and does that matter, and what might that mean?

Generally speaking, I think woman are still expected to converge to what is an established set of norms and behaviours when it comes to leadership style. So I'll just put that out there. For my journey, you heard a bit about my professional life. I started off doing economics at Queensland Uni, and then ended up at the Reserve Bank.

Then after a period of time, I did a PhD at ANU working on economics in Asia. I then found myself in an International Relations department as a post-doc. Think of a rogue economist working in the fuzzy environment of International Relations and under the very watchful eye of Stuart Harris, who's a former Secretary of this department.

That really showed me early on in my career the value of interdisciplinary interaction, because you learn a lot from other disciplines as you go through your life. When I embarked on a public service career, such a privilege, as previous colleagues have said, to be working in the APS.

It's really is just an amazing career in the opportunities that you get, and I've had great opportunities in Treasury and ONA and DFAT and PM and CN as you heard, being the G20 Sherpa, which for me was probably the most challenging role I've ever had, which really was a lot about resilience over an extended period of time, but it also taught me the value of what amazing things teams can really achieve and it's not up to one individual.

So now as Suzanne mentioned, I'm fortunate enough to be leading great department of which there are fantastic members of my team all here today, but covering all these really important issues I think of Innovation, Science and Technology, which are really front and centre of the fourth industrial revolution, and it is changing the way we work and think about so many thing.

I guess the bottom line is, I never imagined I'd be doing any of these roles when I first started out, so for emerging leaders the reflections that I would take, at least based on how I've seen my career, is don't over-plan your career, just tap into things that you're passionate about and where you think you'll make a difference.

Be really curious in questioning, and really take those forks in the road when they come up and look for opportunities to really move across boundaries. It's easier said than done, and having I think role models, mentors and coaches are

really, really important. They're all different roles, and I think we need them individually and collectively at different times of our careers.

All of my mentors and career role models through most of my career have been men, and I think that's very different from what it is now. I think coaching is really important. I came to coaching later than perhaps what I should have, because I think it's really important to have someone who will expose, navigate and help you sort of understand some of the barriers that you might impose on yourself in your leadership roles without perhaps knowing it.

They're also really important for helping you get perspective and balance within your life. I think networking is just so important. Again, I think I've come late to appreciate just the value of networking, because again, it goes to some of those ingrained personality features that perhaps women have, where we're not as perhaps ready to put ourselves ... not all women, but not ready to put ourselves out there as quickly as we should.

But networking really begets networking, and men do it a whole lot better I think than what women do. But back to I guess the areas that I've worked on. I'm still very concerned about the lack of progress ensuring we get a better balance of diversity, particularly in economics, in science and in strategic studies.

It's terrific to sort of see where DFAT is in terms of leadership, both with Secretary and with Ministers, but I do think as stewards of the APS, certainly Secretaries, that we have the positional authority to really make a difference across so many areas, and that's an area that I'm really committed and passionate about.

Science, and in particular the statistics, are really underwhelming, 35% of our STEM undergraduates, it's only 16% of those who are in the workforce who are women, and really only 12% of women in the workforce in STEM occupied positions are in the top income brackets. So clearly that's not sustainable for a country that really needs to be focusing on innovation and the future of work.

Economics, a pretty sad story actually in terms of the number of women coming through economics, and that's been going on for a long period of time. Just 35% of enrolments in economics now are economics students. That's really important, because you can't have many conversations about policy or anything without having economic content, so that really goes to how we think about our roles going forward.

The intelligence community, an area that Kerry and I spent quite a lot ... Here's Dr. Morgan.

The Hon Ros K.: Trust you to be late and make a grand entrance.

Dr. Heather S.: Does that mean I get another minute then?

The Hon Ros K.: That's my husband.

Dr. Heather S.: Yeah, thank you.

Dr. Morgan: I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. I should go sit in the corner.

Dr. Heather S.: You just sit there and be quiet now. I was saying Kerry and I would know this experience well of the intelligence community, and I think the expansion, the reforms that are going on at the moment will really help build more women coming into the ranks.

I think we're doing very well on foreign policy, but there are very few women coming through Strategic Studies programmes. And if, again, put economics, science and strategic studies together, this is where power often resides in decision making.

So they're really important for all sorts of reasons, but I do think they are really key to power and those who use it. So that sort of brings me to the question that I raised about, or at least what I found sort of intellectually interesting, and I often reflect on, in my working life, as to how do we define power and what does that mean for women leaders and indeed for really all leaders?

Often, as we should, power is really about the ability to influence the behaviour of others and to get the outcomes that you may want. It's very important obviously in foreign policy, it's very key to achieving outcomes, but technology is really dispersed power in a way that it's really changed how you exercise power and its certainly empowered individuals and non-state actors, as we know.

Yet the vast majority of images of power are still male centric, and we've all seen the studies when you ask a cohort to draw an image of a leader, and it's usually drawn as a male. So I think at least we really do need to think about re-envisioning and even rewarding a more collective picture of leadership by redefining both masculine and feminine traits as being strong and desirable characteristics.

Those attributes of hard skills married with soft skills are really going to be essential going forward if we want a more collaborative world, and indeed if we're going to achieve some of those real global outcomes. But in the end if we really focus, I think, on a much more broader definition, we won't just see more female leaders, we'll see more evolved leaders across the cohort, which brings me to my final point around I'm a really strong believer in collaborative leadership.

I think one of paradoxes of our times is this combination of a decline in trust, the rise of hard power leadership in some cases, which really seems at odd for the need to have collaborative models of leadership in order to achieve really any outcomes.

So the future workforce, the future customer, the future business model is really ... well, it is now actually, needs a collaborative network leadership, and I think it's very much the future of the APS and which we're having a conversation

through the APS review. I know Kerry was talking in the previous panel about, I think the really good example we previously had of a-

Kerry: Before we were divorced.

Dr. Heather S.: ... before we were divorced, yeah, of a super portfolio, and we can go into that in more detail. So I think my final bit of, I guess reflection would be, having that technical acumen is really important, but it will only get you so far in your career.

As you move through leadership roles it's really that ability to drive collaboration, that ability to influence, to be externally networked, and it's that whole set of essential humanistic type skill that are going really to be important going forward. So thank you.

Suzanne McCourt: Thank you so much. Ros, we'd love to hear from you.

The Hon Ros K.: Okay. Thanks very much. If you don't mind, I'm going to stand, because I'm an ex-school teacher and so I'm so used to standing. Thank you very much, and it's wonderful to be with so many great women and a few of the men, particularly those who come late to listen to their wife speak.

So my experience has obviously been quite different from the other panellists, because I did the public sector, but as a member of parliament and as a minister, then I worked in the private sector, mainly in the construction and the mining industry, again, totally male dominated industries, international industries.

Then I went and worked, chaired a not for profit, and now I'm back in that sort of defence world in the Commonwealth War Graves, which in itself is a totally different culture, and that's an international one. So that's the perspective I bring. I don't want to disappoint you too much, but I have to say when we look at leadership and you see all these American leadership books, I think most of them are gobbledygook.

I think the bottom line is there is no one right answer on what is leadership, because leadership will be different for every single one of you, because the context you're working in is different, and your personalities are different. But there are underpinning, I think, values and there are things that underpin leadership that I have come to realise are incredibly important.

I'll tell you a little story first, so my husband used to work in the treasury, and in the old days the treasury used to judge, I think, a lot of their output on how many hours they spent there. They'd all sort of look who was there on a Sunday afternoon. I mean they were just incredible machines, they'd work day and night.

But they were policy junkies, and here was I just a poor member of Parliament who actually had to rely on a few people skills to get elected every now and again. When David went to Westpac, he realised then he had to actually convince 35,000 people to climb up the hill. He looked at me and said, "You know those skills that you've got, you've always talked about people and

working with people?" He said, "They really matter?" "Oh, yeah." I'm going to sort of just go through-

Dr. Morgan: I'm a very slow learner.

The Hon Ros K.: ... a few of the points that have emerged for me over the years. As the other panellists have said, and Heather particularly has, everything is changing out there, the world is changing, and when you live in the UK and you visit the US a lot, you just see ... and you go through elections here and changes of leadership, the world is changing.

So under that you've got to have your own moral compass. Do you know that I think the most important thing about you is you and you are own authenticity? So there's no point in trying to pretend you're something you're not. Be yourself. You know what your values are, and you know that's called you, and that is fundamentally important.

By the way, if you're working in an environment where they don't suit you, get out of there. Get out of there, it's not the place for you. You will not grow, and you will not feel nurtured. Sometimes you're going to have some pains in the asses of some ministers, it wouldn't have ever been me, but if you feel at the end of the day you can't do it, move to another department.

You're very lucky, you've got those options here. I think you've got to be authentic. Politicians too have got to be authentic, it's the most important thing. I think the electorates are demanding that more and more. I think the second thing is that you don't have all the answers, so you've got to realise ... and Heather spoke about that, being part of a team.

But most importantly, having that ability to listen. You've probably met a lot of people who talk at you, but they never listen to what you've got to say. Sometimes that happens with women, it happens with me sometimes, very rarely, sometimes when I come back to Australia or I go somewhere and they don't know anything I've done, and then I'll say, "Well when I was selecting my cows recently and my bulls, I just looked at the size of their testicles, what do you think about that?"

And it's a really good way of breaking ... they're thinking, "What is this woman?" So I mean it is really important that you do listen to people, and the people who work for you feel that you really care about them. Now you can't have that as an overdone strength, because you've also got to be strong with them and sometimes you've got to tell them that what they've done is not the right thing.

But I believe that if people like you and respect you, they will appreciate that. One person who worked for me once said, "The thing I liked about working with you Ros, that you tell us what to do and then you'd let us get on and do it." Well, in the end that did backfire a little bit, but by and large most people have not let me down, particularly my bureaucrats. One did, but I won't go there.

I think the third thing that is fundamentally important is communication, and by that, I mean you really need to tell people what you think. You can't think that they can read your mind, because they can't, and keep it simple. I honestly believe it is so much better to do things face to face, than send an email.

I reckon an email is the coward's way out, and it's so much better to look people in the eyes, even if you've got to give them bad news, and say to them ... and if they respect you and that word respect comes up again, and they know you care about them, I think it's a much better environment in which you can deliver bad news.

Now the next issue I want to talk about, and I wouldn't be saying this if it were a male audience, because you've got to believe in yourself. If you carry a too an extreme situation, which won't happen with women, it's hubris, and we've seen that like in so many places with men.

But with women, you've got to believe in yourself, push yourself a bit. If you really believe it, say it. Be out there. As you heard, I work in the UK a lot with Women on Boards, oh my god, getting the women there ... I say, "Be more like Aussie women, say what you think." Now of course we often, sometimes culturally we get ourselves into a bit of trouble by saying what we think.

I've got my myself, several times, into trouble by saying what I think, but I do think you need the people you work with to really know what you're thinking and give them a bit of encouragement. Say nice things to them, you look good today or you feel good today.

I mean I know if I'm feeling miserable, I can make most people around me miserable too.

Dr. Morgan: Yeah, I support that.

The Hon Ros K.: But you don't want to do that, you want to ... Gail Kelly did an interview with me recently for a programme I run called Inspiring Women, and she said, "Sometimes I've had a dreadful day and I'll be driving home and before I get in that front door," she said, "I'm just going to relax and say, 'I'm not taking my work home,' because I know that I can make them all unhappy. So I'm going to actually just pull myself together."

I think that is so important. Now there will be cultural differences, and many of you will work across different cultures, so you've got to be sensitive when you're trying to get your message across and communicate, but I think it is really important that you keep your messages simple and get that across.

Now I'm going to mention a few other things that are not going to be in any of the books. It is really important that you choose the right partner or not have a partner, but look, if you've got misery at home ... and by the way, I'm speaking from experience, I've got a good one now, but I traded in the first one, I can tell you.

So I can speak from experience, if you've got misery at home, you will not be able to do your job in the way you should, so sort it out. Sort it out. Either move on, or move out, or you're better off by yourself. But seriously ... and it is an issue that so many people do not talk to women about, because what we always try and do is patch everything up, and in the end you just get exhausted.

That leads me on to another one, again we don't talk about much, but I think it dawned on me when I got breast cancer, you've got to look after yourself, because the boys will. They'll take time to go to the gym or go for the run, but you don't, because you're trying to do everything else.

Well, you've got to look after yourself, because if you don't look after yourself, the rest of the place will fall apart, and you will not be able to do these big jobs, because they require energy. If you're sick and you're not keeping yourself fit ... you've got to give yourself time, you've got to be good to yourself. It's really important.

I mean I wasn't always, I know that, and sometimes I would just have a day when I would just burst into tears and go lock myself away, because I was so tired. I look back now, my daughters just had a baby, and I look at what I did. I do not know how I did it. I had a child ... I went to a ball the night before, I had Jess just before the budget, that was on a Sunday.

I went back to work on Friday with all this controversy about whether a woman should be allowed to go back to work with a new baby, I went to the budget, I worked all through. I had another baby 14 months later at the beginning of another election campaign. When he was six days old, we went to the opening of the campaign.

That was November. December and Christmas Day, I just started vomiting and I couldn't stop. Keating was coming for lunch-

Dr. Morgan: No, darling, he did come for lunch.

The Hon Ros K.: I know. Then I had to say, "Honestly, I cannot get out of bed." So I rang my dear friend, Dr. Goldrick, who was [inaudible]. I said, "Veronica, you've got to come around and give me a needle or something. Give me some vitamins or something to get me going."

So Keating and David cooked this shocking Christmas lunch, and I had broken down. I had literally broken down, I could not keep going. So none of you want to do that, learn by my mistakes. Think about that bad turkey every time you're feeling tired.

I want to end by a final one, don't let adversity get you. It could've got me so many times. Can you imagine how I felt going through that sport stuff every day in Parliament, questions for three months, and my little boy was starting at a new school and would cry every morning, "Mommy, don't leave me."

I'd be dealing with that and then get into Parliament. I mean but one door closes, seriously another does open, but just don't let anybody get you. Keep your inner core. I remember getting to the airport one day, just after that, and I saw Peter Costello. He'd been an absolute bastard to me during this time, and I went into the ladies, put some makeup on, and I went, and I said ... saw him there, "Hi Peter, how are you going?"

If they don't think they've got you, they don't know how to deal with it. So keep the spirits up, when you're feeling really low, just go in and put a bit of that makeup on your face. We're lucky we can do that, we can hide a lot, and don't let adversity get you, because there's great opportunities out there, as long as you keep believing in yourself. Thank you.

Suzanne McCourt: Thank you Ros, we'd love to hear from Kathryn. Thank you.

Kathryn C.: Thank you. I've discovered the worse part of being number three on the panel is that you have to rewrite your speech halfway through, because everybody else has taken all your stuff. Thank you Ros, thank you Heather. It's really hard to follow Ros, so I'm just going to sit down so I don't have to try and stand up and compete with that great presentation.

I'm going to base my reflections on a career in Public Service of 30 years, but also a career in the Army Reserve of 29 years and talk about the two different organisations and where they've come on the journey. Like Heather, I'm lucky to be of the generation where we didn't face some of the barriers and some of the prejudices that women before you did.

I had two children when I was an SES officer, and everyone thought that was normal. Peter Boxall did ring me a day after I'd had the first one to have a teleconference, but that was good, it was the day after, it wasn't the day of. So we did do some things like that, and he was great. He was really caring and really thoughtful, and then he asked me to wait to have the second one until we got this project done and I did that too.

She was born a month later, so he thought that was a bit close, but anyway. So there was that understand, there was that acceptance of women taking time to do things like that, so I've been very lucky in both the Army and the Public Service.

The other day I was proofreading my daughter's essay, she's at ANU, and for those of you who think homework finishes at year 10 maths, you're very disappointed. But I was reading about this article about the barriers to female leadership, and they talked about the macro, the meso and the micro, so society, organisation and individual, and how you can't just address barriers at any given level, you've got to think about the whole thing and work out how to address those barriers.

So I think in the Public Service and in the Army, we've been really good at addressing those organisational barriers, looking at different ways to make sure the culture is right, so make sure that we have acceptance, to make sure the jobs

are designed correctly, that's there's a proper learning and development opportunities and the like to be able to give people the best opportunity.

At the micro level we've looked at individuals, we've given people negotiating skills, communication skills and dealt with things like work-life balance, childcare and the likes. That's worked really well. But how are we going at the macro level, which is society, and the example, the perceptions and the norms about what is expected of women in those different environments?

Many of us work on policy areas like in the Department of Social Services on prevention of violence against women and children, paid parental leave and my colleagues on childcare and the likes, so we put those in place and we put in place programmes, and I think those programmes are going some way to helping women in those areas.

But still I think there's perceptions and norms that are still thought about that are women's jobs and women's work, and I think we in the Public Service have a great opportunity to set examples and to ... people like Ros, to get out there and do different things, so people say, "Hey, she can do that, so can I as well." I think that's how we will deal with some of those macro barriers, but I think we always have to be on the lookout for that.

That gets to my second point about performance, which cuts across into what Ros was saying about different leadership styles. Women and men have different leadership styles. We have different leadership styles, Heather and I have different leadership styles, I have a different leadership style to Finn Pratt. We were in the same portfolio together for much longer than Heather, and Kerry, we were able to keep our relationship along together before we were divorced.

I don't know what that was, but ... and we work together for many years, and different styles and different attributes, so there is no one style for a woman leader, there's no one style for a male leader. You have to find your own style. You have to have that comfort and that authenticity that makes you feel comfortable, but you've also got to be able to perform in that role.

So when we get to these roles, it's what we do and how we do it that will count, not necessarily who we are. Who we are will be important of course, but people will remember us by what and how we do the role. So I thought I'd take a moment to talk about women in history and where women's leadership has been.

So if you work in the Social Services portfolio, there are four buildings in Canberra names after strong women. So we've got the Caroline Chisholm Centre, Enid Lyons building and Louisa Lawson down in Tuggeranong, we've got Doris Blackburn around the corner here in Forrest.

I worked closely with male ministers, Kim Carr, Dan Tehan and Christian Porter on naming three of those four buildings, and in each of the buildings you'll find a story board that talks about those women and how they contributed over many

years to Australian society, and they would've had it tougher probably than any of us, and they were in what was thought of as female sort of spaces, female domains, but they made massive difference to the environment in which they lived, and the society in which they worked.

So I think through history there's lots of great examples, I'm not going to go back to Florence Nightingale, but she probably gave some great examples as well. When I started at the Department of Social Services, and we seem to have lost our board with all the photos of the previous secretaries, so we got them all out and I realised I was actually the first female secretary of the Department of Social Services.

I thought, "Why was that?" Because it's probably because people thought it was a female dominated space, but yet there had never been a female secretary before. Then I realised we came out of the Treasury and so that probably explained it, in 1939 when we split from the Treasury.

But just because they're female dominated spaces or it's a women's issue, doesn't mean that the leadership hasn't been strong, and those women did great things and there are great opportunities for us to look at those women. I look in the Army now we have female tank commanders and female tank crews and female infantry officers and female soldiers, and they're fabulous.

They're great, they're doing a good job. We also have female nursing officers and female medics that continue the tradition of what the Australian Nursing Service did in World War I, when those really brave women went off to France to nurse in [inaudible] under fire.

So, my message there is about choice, and the great thing is we want everyone to be able to choose the path they want, whether it be in what was once a male dominated space, or once a female dominated space, it's what people want to do and where they think their skills can be best applied.

So in concluding, I would encourage each of you to do that. To think about where you can make the most impact on your life and on the lives of people around you, and where you can provide the most input to your service. Thank you.

Suzanne McCourt: Thank you so much to all the panellists. I feel we've kind of gone massively big picture, we've gone very personal. So we open it up for questions.

Kathryn C.: Let's do that.

Ruth Crawford: Thanks. My name is Ruth Crawford, I come out of the Department of Infrastructure for the WSU. I'm fairly new to the Public Service, I come out of a mining and construction background and I must congratulate, this is an awesome series. I've attended the last one and this one, and I've got a lot out of it, so thank you.

My question is to Kathryn, and if you could address some of the items that the other two speakers have raised, we talk a lot about coaches and mentors and knowing what your values are and the collaboration that happens between leaders.

What responsibility or how do you think that the current female leaders should feel to those coming up the ladder, or who have not yet started their rise on the ladder, and how do the younger people find those mentors and coaches in their disciplines?

Kate Driver: My name's Kate Driver, I'm at Questacon and in Heather's portfolio. Just bouncing off that question about the mentoring and the coaching. I'd also be really interested in the panel's views on multiple mentors.

So I have about three or four mentors, depending on different aspects of my professional life. So perhaps you could just add a little bit of colour and movement around that question as well, how many mentors have each of you had on what aspects, or perhaps you've had a combination of mentors and coaches over time, because mentoring is often spoken about as one, and I don't think that's the full picture.

Suzanne McCourt: Do you want to start Kathryn?

Kathryn C.: Okay. So coaching and mentoring, I think a lot of women feel a bit uncomfortable about doing it, because they think, "Gee whiz, I don't think I've got anything to teach anyone." I remember someone asking me to mentor them about 10 years ago. I said, "I don't whether really you'd get much benefit from that."

But then you realise that you grow as a person by doing it yourself, but also you probably have lots of insights to give people. It was more in the Army context I think I noticed it than in the Public Service, because there are a lot more women in the Public Service than there are in the Army. We are improving, but we've still got a little way to go.

I realised that many of those young female officers were looking, and I had children and they wanted to know how you could actually do that. They wanted to ask me things like, "How do you get organised for are morning and still be out the door by 7:30?" and things like that. I say, "Well, I'm not very good at that," but just sharing just what I did and how, when my kids were little, broke my morning into 15-minute intervals and you had to be there or otherwise you got in trouble.

To do that, it was really quite insightful for me to think about what I was doing, as well as to it through with them. Mentors for me, sometimes Public Service, sometimes Army as well, like Heather generally men, because there weren't a lot of women, and so worked really closely with some great men who have provided great insights like Ian Watt and Peter Boxall and those in the Public Service who worked really closely with, and both professional and personal insights, and particularly around the leadership, and many in the Army as well.

So I do think you can have more than one, and sometimes people feel the title mentor kind of puts them in a box, so just catch up with people sometimes, bounce ideas off, rather than have that name tag of mentor I think is always a little bit more valuable. But I think everyone in this room probably has to think about the fact that it's kind of our responsibility to do it, even if we don't think we're going to be really good at it or we haven't got much to offer, it's worth giving a try.

Suzanne McCourt: Did you want to go Heather?

Dr. Heather S.: I think Kathryn's made a really good point, for me I think it can be a discovery process and sometimes you're being mentored, and you don't really realise it, and that's sort of where you think about role models and mentors. So again, I've had great experiences through my career of men suggesting, "You should go and do this," or, "I'm going to put you on this programme."

Or someone who's an academic who sent me off to North Korea in the mid 1990's, which opened up a whole new world to me and all sorts of things, but it's about your development as distinct from the official sort of mentoring, which I think is an ongoing conversation where, as I mentioned, it just allows you to explore those aspects of your personality, which you may get through formal feedback processes, but you don't feel you get the right responses or the ways to actually exercise yourself in really responding to those development needs.

So I'd encourage also just feel your way, but also find someone who's not like you and so you don't gravitate to like types. I guess Kate, like your question, you've obviously got different mentors for aspects that you may use for both work support or work-life support, so I think that's fine, that's great.

The Hon Ros K.: Politics a bit different, because you don't have that many friends in politics amongst other politicians, I'm afraid. It's a pretty competitive environment, but I found when you ask, it's amazing how people help you. When I was leaving the public sector for the private sector, a dear fellow who I really didn't know, he didn't owe me anything, he'd been suggested to me from another friend, spent hours with me helping to work out what skills I had that were applicable to the private sector, because when you've been a cabinet minister, no one quite understands what you do, and they don't understand what value that could add to the private sector.

So he sat with me and really helped me, gave me hours and hours of time, to help hone in the skills that I had. I think if you're going to move into any other organisation, you've got to understand what value add you can add, and I didn't quite understand that. Can I just too, it doesn't have to be all that formal. Sometimes I'm a great believer in the cup of coffee and say to someone, "Look, can you just give me a minute. We'll have a cup of coffee together."

And almost everyone, male or female, will do that for you. So again, go back to that point I made, communicate, this is my issue. I do a lot of this. Now I feel I've got to give back now, because honestly when I was a minister with two little kids

and we were running two careers, I didn't really have a lot of time to help other women and I feel sort of immensely guilty about that.

So what I run now is a programme called Inspiring Women Reflect, and it does exactly what you said, I do it in the UK, but I'm now doing it here, and I interview women and get them to tell their stories. Not about how great they are, but what are the lessons they've learnt, and they're almost all the same. Whether you're in the public or the private sector, it is all that thing about communication, looking after yourself, all those things I talk to you about.

But it was interesting today, just this morning, I'm doing an interview with Thérèse Rein, who I think is one of the great women that people don't know much about, but she's achieved so much. One of the things we're talking about is the dual career, and I said, "What are you doing now?" She sold her big business. She said, "I'm doing mentoring," she said, "and I'm absolutely loving it." I thought ... so most people like helping other people, so if you just ask.

I think that's a much better way of doing it than formalising ... you may need to formalise someone to coach you, which is different from mentoring.

Suzanne McCourt: Thank you everyone. Some more questions? Yeah.

Vanessa D.: Hi, Vanessa Dangerfield from the Department of Human Services. Kathryn, I wondered what lessons learned you had to share with us. You managed the integration of the agencies, and what you have to share with us from that time?

Suzanne McCourt: I'll just see if there's a couple more.

Bronwen Jaggers: Hi, Bronwen Jaggers from Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, my question was for Heather, you talked a bit about the technical skills are great, but they'll only get you so far. That sort of caught my attention, because I think if you're in the Public Service, male and female, we sort of as people move up the ranks into the EL's and then into the SES, the switch flips and all of a sudden, the expectation is you're in that leadership role, not the deep technical expert.

So I'm sort of interested in your thoughts on how you make that transition? You kind of touched on a couple of things, but at the same time you do need to keep up that technical expertise to a degree, so how do you carve out enough time to do the reading or talk to the people or connect with the university sector, whatever it is that you need to do to sort of keep that skill set that got you there in the first place. Thank you.

Dr. Heather S.: Good question.

Suzanne McCourt: Great, do we have one more?

Judy Schneider: Hi, Judy Schneider. Heather, I was very interested in your comments about power and leadership style, and I was just wondering you didn't give us a lot of context about what was driving your thoughts there or what you hoped to get

out of them by thinking about these issues. I was wondering if you could just elaborate a bit more on that?

Suzanne McCourt: Four questions, is that great, do you want to start Kathryn?

Kathryn C.: Okay. So Human Services in 2010, we brought together the old Department of Human Services, Centrelink, Medicare, Child Support and the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Services, about 40,000 staff in 800 and something locations across Australia. There were 14 Deputy Secretaries, I could never remember all their names at first.

I remember Kerry, okay, but it was a bit like The Sound of Music when they'd say, "That's other one, you know, tall, dark hair," because it was just so big, and we had to shrink of course from 40,000. We kind of started with the Deputies and the SCS, because we were going to have to do that with the entire department.

So I think to sum up, we probably did the hard edge stuff first, the structures, the financial systems, the enterprise agreements, all that sort of hygiene factor stuff that we had to do. I left what I called the soft piece, which was the cultural piece, until a little bit later, because I was part of the Machinery of Government changes when the Department of Admin Services moved in with the Department of Finance, and some of you may not have been born during that period.

But it wasn't really that pleasant, and it was because at the time the bigger department thought they would impose the culture and said, "This is going to be the culture," and I was really reluctant to do that with five organisations who had rich cultures that have been in place for many years.

I mean Medicare's culture have been in place since 1975, and they were very attached to it. So we left it for a little while, and then someone did a review, Peter Hughes from New Zealand, he said, "You've got to do the cultural piece." I said, "Okay." So we went out and asked staff how they wanted to behave in the department, what were the behaviours they wanted to see from their leaders and from each other?

So we had a big vote, everybody was allowed to vote on their top five behaviours, and we came up with it. At one stage the [inaudible] running it said to me, "What if you don't like them?" and I said, "As long as they're legal, I'll like them." We came up with these five behaviours, we called it the "We statement."

I think they've still got it, which talked about how we wanted to behave and what we wanted to do, so I think that was the most powerful thing, was to leave it settle for a little while, and then let people build something new. We talked about building on the strengths of the old organisation, to build something even better.

Suzanne McCourt: Heather.

Dr. Heather S.: Okay. A really good question about how do you maintain your technical knowledge as you move through the ranks. I think we're always investing in our, economist term, human capital, and we do need to really think about, because we're all engaged in lifelong learning.

But I think from a disciplinary basis, that investment that you make early on is really important, because it gives you frameworks for thinking about issues and it hones your judgement on issues. Once you move, particularly into the SES ranks, you really don't have time, and you really should be honing in on a few set of strategic issues.

But having said that, going back to the role of mentoring and role models, look for opportunities to keep building your human capital on the technical side, but really, it's the leadership skills that you will need to hone as you move through an organisation, just the breadth becomes really important.

Your contribution to organisational culture is not about what you know technically, it's really how do you achieve outcomes and what's the toolkit of which your technical knowledge is but one. But look for opportunities because that's the passionate bit that you start off with.

On the notion of power, partly motivated by the AFR power issue, which was really quite striking in how you think about overt and covert power in terms of the gender representation, but not necessarily motivated by that solely. But it's really how does society think about power, and I think it goes to this confidence issue that Ros was talking about, about what is impact and how do you measure impact.

I think society still measures impact in some ways, by how power is perceived, and that can be a set of characteristics about, as Ros says, high confidence, really the alpha dog syndrome on the hind legs sort of talking a lot, and it really goes to style versus performance.

I do think women are not on the whole really seen as power brokers. If you think of Margaret Thatcher, an incredibly, incredibly powerful leader and a very powerful presence, then you think you do have very powerful women leaders, but there are certain characteristics I think that society still associates with power, and they tend to be I think more male type characteristics.

Suzanne McCourt: Ros, did you have any comments on that?

The Hon Ros K.: I'm just listening to all this, and we're talking about power and influence, the real issue is how you relate to your minister, how you serve your minister. I mean the Public Service is there to work with your ministers, and I think it is an incredibly important skill that you know how to do that.

That you know how the political system works, because you're all working in the context of the political system, and if you don't know how to manage that, you're not going to be particularly good at your job. You're not going to get

anything implemented. I think that is a very important skill that all of you need to consider.

If you really wanted the power, I mean I don't know when you're doing your reorganisation that had to be done, but I presume your minister had some role in relation, or did you change five times during the course of that?

Kathryn C.: No, we had four.

The Hon Ros K.: Four, okay. But what do you think about ... I mean it just seems to me, I'd look at things totally from a different perspective obviously. I've been a minister and most of you, those who have been Public Service, have served me very well, but I figured I was the boss.

Kathryn C.: So, I suppose I've written ability to influence, how to get the outcome we are looking for, and I'm not sure it's needs to ... so sometimes with the interpretation of power, it's kind of raw, directive, you will do, you will do, I will say, everyone will achieve.

I don't think that works for men or women. I think it is more that subtle ability to influence, ability to understand the norms, the rules, the practises, how to get around them, how to get what you want-

The Hon Ros K.: That's right.

Kathryn C.: ... how to persuade, how to take those four ministers on that same journey. There was something hills and around.

The Hon Ros K.: That's what it really is. That's what success in this business is.

Kathryn C.: So that ability to influence, and sometimes that doesn't have to be in your face. It can be very subtle, and I think that's one of ... I don't think it's picked up in the AFR power review.

The Hon Ros K.: No.

Kathryn C.: I remember looking at some of those over the years and thought, "Gee whiz, they didn't get that right, did they?" Because there were women who were incredibly powerful and particularly in Canberra, and wielding incredible power, and were not anywhere mentioned there. I wondered whether that was the strength of their power, was that they weren't recognised and the ability to influence without them knowing it.

The Hon Ros K.: I have to say, as a minister though, you have to do the same thing.

Dr. Heather S.: Indeed.

The Hon Ros K.: Because you don't get anything done either, particularly if you're minister in the Defence Forces, unless you know how to bring them with you.

Dr. Heather S.: Indeed.

The Hon Ros K.: Because they'll fight you. So it is a case of ... it's a very delicate relationship between the minister and the Public Service. It's quite sensitive and I really think it's quite unique. I think we do it pretty well in our country, and there is this big review going on at the moment, I know, about the politicisation.

I think there'll be a lot less politicisation if all of you learn how to manipulate ... manage the ministers.

Kathryn C.: Influence.

The Hon Ros K.: Influence. Influence is the word. So we go forward here and we influencers.

Suzanne McCourt: Thank you. I'm conscious of the time and I don't want to get in the way of somebody and a glass of wine, but I think it would be lovely to just hear a 30 second kind of wrap up, your key message that we can leave with today. Ros, would you like to start?

The Hon Ros K.: I think just value yourself and push yourself and have a go. I love that, Heather mentioned that, but I think fundamentally if you just come out of today and say, "I am going to stand up straight, I'm going to just have a go when I believe I should and I'm well qualified for it," even if you're not well qualified, the boys will think they are anyway, so just go for it.

Suzanne McCourt: Thanks Ros.

Dr. Morgan: A very sexist comment. It's a very accurate one.

Suzanne McCourt: Heather?

Dr. Heather S.: I was really taken by Ros's really great points about having a moral compass. If you know who you are, particularly under those periods of high adversity, and you maintain that core set of belief in yourself and have core values about how you think about life and people, then that gets you through pretty much all the trials and tribulations, and also the successes that you will have during your career.

Kathryn C.: That's the advantage of being last that time, you get time to think about it. Again, be who you want to be, do what you kind of want to do. Look at role models but take the bits that work for you and discard the bits that don't work for you.

Finally to go back to one of Ros's points, try and find somewhere in the day, every day, where you can find that little bit of joy, that little bit of time for you, whether it's ... maybe it's walking out just to get the mail, or some five minutes, or walking the dogs or something where you're kind of by yourself ... you don't have to be by yourself, you might want to be with someone you desperately love, but find somewhere where there's some joy and that it belongs to you, and

make sure that you keep that even balance so you can go back out there and influence people to get the outcomes you want.

Suzanne McCourt: Thank you so much. Look, this has been totally inspiring, and I can see by people's faces that it's inspired many of you in the audience. We have such real personal stories, I'm a mother of young children as well, and taking on a role as a Head of Mission that the integrity and being true to yourself and backing yourself, they're all messages that I had to learn in that role and it's absolutely amazing.

We know that we can take those lessons and then make them our own in our own lives, and I think that's what's so empowering about a conversation like this where you've all been very honest and open and willing to share your thoughts and what went wrong and what was the challenges in your life, and how hard things can get, but yet you actually work a way to get through and keep the big picture in mind. So I'd like to thank you all for your amazing contribution to today.

The Hon Ros K.: Thanks very much.