



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 FOUR

Renèe Leon PSM, Secretary of the Department of Human Services

Rosemary Huxtable PSM, Secretary of the Department of Finance

Kathy Leigh, Head of Service and Director-General of the ACT Government

DFAT DIPLOMATIC ACADEMY

BARTON, CANBERRA

Kathy Kostyrko:

As of this month the workplace Gender Equality Agency reported that 50% of the Australian workforce is female. However, only 30.5% of key management personnel are female and only 17% are CEOs. The proportion of female directors on boards although improved, was still only 25.8% and female chairs sits at 13.7%. What has been reported to the WGEA is that women remain underrepresented at every stage in the career pipeline.

At Hays, we've reduced the gender diversity report last year that corroborates the statistic, finding that for 80% of us, the most senior person in the organisation we work for is male. 61% of us have a male line manager, meaning female leadership role models are still hard to find. As a solution that also showed that adopting and accepting equal parental leave and flexible working options without career consequences for both men and women, could be the next logical step to help make real and lasting gender equality progress in the workplace.

What was also interesting was that 96% of the women surveyed, but only 64% of the men think that women encounter barriers in career progression. That's why hearing how successful women have achieved senior leadership roles is so important for us all. The more we talk about it and get inspiration from the journeys of successful women, the more likely it will be that biases and perceptions will change. In my own career there have been inspiring and supportive women who have been the catalyst for my progression into leadership roles. It's now up to all of us to support the next generation of female leaders and do what we can to increase the pipeline of women into executive roles. I remember when I congratulated Kathy Leigh on becoming the first female head of the ICT public service. Her poignant reply was, she looked forward to the time when it was no longer an anomaly.

Inspirational female leadership is changing the landscape of possibilities for women in the workforce. Today we're privileged to hear from three remarkable women who are leading their way in their fields and inspiring others to follow them. I'd now like to hand over to Penny Williams, who's going to introduce the panel.

Penny Williams:

Good afternoon everyone and welcome to the event today. My name is Penny Williams and I'm a Deputy Secretary here at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Perhaps more importantly for this event, I am the DFAT band three women in leadership champion. Can I thank Kathy for her warm welcome, but also thank Hays Recruitment for their ongoing support for IPAA. Before we proceed with today's formalities, I too would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of this land, the normal people on who we're meeting today. I'm going to take a moment to acknowledge our speakers and then give you a sense of how the event is going to run today.

Can I introduce Renee Leon, PSM Secretary Department of Human Services. Rosemary Huxtable, PSM Secretary Department of Finance, and Kathy Leigh, Head of Service and Director General ACT Government. It was interesting just as we were talking professionally, we worked at the two of our children or at least friends that's the kind of women in leadership for you. Can I also welcome the

many other colleagues who are here today including agency heads, senior executives, guests, members and partners joining us for this address.

I'm hosting today's event on behalf of Francis Adamson, the Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and EPA ACT president. We're really pleased that we're able to host this session at the DFAT Diplomatic Academy which was launched by the honourable Julie Bishop, the former Minister for Foreign Affairs earlier this year. We're also pleased to be able to name a room after our former foreign minister only a few months ago.

I said at the outset that I am the band three women in leadership champion at DFAT. Can I say that we've come a very long way in a short time that since the women in leadership strategy was launched in December 2014. We will meet the target of having 40% of our SES band ones by the end of this year. 40% of our HOMs are women, the person who made the 40% for us was an indigenous woman, our ambassador to Spain. The not, why not around flexible work has been accepted and adopted across the department, in terms of recruitment and promotion, perhaps more significantly in our last SES band one round 50% for the very first time, 50% of the applicants were women. I think the thing that I can say that I've learned as a champion for WIL is that, cultural change is hard. To embed it is hard and we see an unevenness and things change when you don't quite expect them. It's really important to have that conversation that goes on and in different forums with different people, and to sometimes it has to be uncomfortable and awkward. I think the thing that we really have now in DFAT is a conversation.

Can I say that, one of the things that we've most heard from staff and Francis did a listen and learn session with five groups of staff around women in leadership earlier in the year. Is that, people not only want to tell their stories, they want to hear the stories of others, that's why events like this as Kathy said, are so, so very important. This is actually the fourth in the EPA women in leadership series of events. The first event was in August, that included the inaugural Williams oration delivered by Anne Sherry AO with Francis and [inaudible] joining afford discussion on stage. The second event in September was a panel discussion that included three secretaries. We welcomed Liz Cosson, Dr. Michele Bruniges and Carey Heartland. The third event earlier this month was a panel discussion that included two secretaries and a former minister. We welcomed Dr. Heather Smith, Kathryn Campbell, the honourable Ros Kelly. Today we have our fourth session and our final session for the year with Renee, Rosemary and Kathy.

Now, I've spoken to our fabulous panellists and they have agreed that I can take the liberty of shortening their impressive CVs, so that we can give a little more time for questions and to have that conversation. Just to recap, Renee joined the Department of Human Services as Secretary in September 2017, and prior to that she was Secretary of Department of Employment from 2013 to 2017. Rosemary is the Secretary of the Department of Finance, having commenced in December 2016, prior to starting as Secretary she was a Deputy Secretary in the Department of Health and Ageing. Kathy as I said is Head of Service at ACT Government and Director General of the Chief Minister Treasury and Economic Development Directorate. Has had a number of positions in justice in the ACT

Government but was previously with the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department. Please join me in welcoming our speakers.

Renee Leon:

Well, I feel I should immediately defer to Rosemary being the central agency and also the one who holds the first strings. Given our long friendship and association, I hope that she'll just use the opportunity to catch up on what she was going to say and get that five minutes that I thought I was going to get to think about what to say.

Just to tell you briefly I suppose about the journey from there to here. I have been in the Commonwealth public service for most of the last 25 years. Most of that I spent actually with Kathy in the Attorney General's Department. I'm trained as a lawyer and my career took me from university into the Attorney General's Department. I only left there in order to go to the ACT Government for three years where I headed the Department of Justice and Community Safety. I came back into Attorney General's Department as a deputy and then spent time in PMNC as a deputy. We've talked before this together about the interesting experience that all three of us have had of having a career that's travelled across both line agencies and central agencies and the really useful perspective that that gives you. I should say as well that that journey has of course been accompanied by the joys and challenges of raising a family, and that for most of that time I was doing that as a single parent. With the whole work life balance thing has been something I have some little bit of experience of.

I did want to reflect today a bit about leadership and leadership in the public service in particular. Looking at it with that lens of both line agency and central agency and for me a bit of state jurisdiction as well from having worked in the ACT Government. The great thing I'm sure you all know about working in the public service is that, what it really gives you is always opportunities to look to the future. I'm the kind of leader who is always thinking about the future and the future state and the where we want to get to and the ambition for a better future. Being a leader in the public service is just intrinsically very satisfying, because to always doing is looking to the future and imagining the possibilities for a better future. That is of course what brings many of us into the APS in the first place. The great thing about leadership opportunities is it gives you the chance to actually make some of that a reality. That's I think one of the very satisfying things about leadership, is the opportunity to actually not just drive yourself towards improving the current state, but also to harness the whole resources of a team or of an organisation to drive towards an improved state, a change in the landscape for the better.

Of course, one of the great things about being a secretary is you get to do that, not only in your own patch, but across the whole public service. Both Rosemary and I and a number of other secretaries are involved in the APS reform committee. If Rosemary had gone first, she could have stolen my thunder, but instead I'm getting to say what a great piece of work it is that Rosemary is leading there, where there's multiple streams of work designed to change the landscape for the better, for the whole public service and over the medium term. A really important piece of what I think of as the essential role of

stewardship that the further up the leadership chain you are, the more important that stewardship role is.

A couple of the pieces of that uniquely allow me to kind of combine my current passion for leadership in the service delivery space with that passion for leadership across the whole public service, is the focus we now have increasingly on citizen centred policy design and the desirability of having the ultimate recipient of the services in our minds from the very beginning. That's the kind of piece, the kind of change that it's very satisfying for the leadership cadre of the public service to be involved in something that's not just about this NPP or this little piece of legislation, but a really fundamental shift in how we think about both policy and delivery that's ultimately for the better for the public service and the citizens that it serves.

Let me say a little bit about what I think that in all times of leadership, but especially in sort of troubled times or ambiguous times, which some recent years have sometimes been. It's quite important for leaders to have your own kind of north star about what's really important to you as a leader. There's no cookie cutter answer to that, for all of you it will be something very personal of who I am as a leader and what it is that I will fall back on to give me a decision-making path forward in terms of how I should do my leadership today or in this situation.

For me the things that are my sort of north star as a leader and that I think about as what I bring to the leadership piece is that, you know the setting, the inspiring vision of what that future's like is, it's so important for everything else that you do. Partly because it then becomes your own piece of inspiration of why you're going to keep getting up and delivering it every day. It gives meaning to staff about why they're doing it and what they're trying to achieve. It just makes it fun and exciting as well to have that inspiring vision for the future, so that is always part of my personal north star. What's the inspiring vision we're driving towards?

Secondly, the satisfaction of actually delivering on that, like it's never really enough just to have an inspiring vision if you can't look back after a year or two years and see the fantastic progress that's being made towards it. Thirdly and this is something that I think everyone probably needs to have in their toolkit, is how no one delivers anything alone. That the piece that we have to do is always a collaborative piece. If you're trying to deliver on your own, you're doing it wrong, so collaboration, both with your colleagues in your own space, with colleagues in other departments and with partners outside is just such an essential leadership skill.

For me they're the kind of north stars of leadership that, if in doubt, break glass, reach for those, they always will work for you. The only other thing I wanted to say and I'm sure I'm about to get the wind off about it is that, of course I was deeply sobered by the introduction about as we all know, the landscape of gender equality still has more work to do. It is very good to note that in the public service, we're now 50-50 at the secretary level in the APS. When I was involved in the embryonic establishment of the women's network in the

Attorney General's Department, now more years than we all care to count, women were I think 20% of the SES then, and they were all band ones.

I remember when Kathy as a division head got to act as secretary for a week because all of the male deputies were away. All of us band one women took an opportunity to go up and visit Kathy in the secretary's office because it was so great to go, "Yes, we're going to get there." It's really good to reflect on how much has changed in a relatively short space of time, that at least at the secretary level it is now 50-50. I think it does make a real difference, not only to the landscape in secretary's board itself, but to what the whole APS can, the women of the APS can see when they look up. That, "Yes, actually I could do that and I can do it," and many of you will do it. There's still a lot to do at all levels, but it's good to know that you can actually crack the glass ceiling and sustain that. That's probably enough for me, lead off on.

Penny Williams: Thank you. Thank you, Renee. Thanks, and now view from the Central Agency.

Rosemary H.: Okay, now that she's stolen all my [inaudible]. Well, thank you and I would absolutely agree with much of what Renee's said. I guess I come to this venue as the Secretary of the Central Agency. As Renee has noted, many of us here, Kathy obviously is head of government in the ICT. Renee has had significant experience as a Deputy in PMNC as well as your role in Attorney General's. It might surprise you and maybe you all recognise this, that I'm only the second female secretary of the Central Agency in the Commonwealth. The first was my predecessor, my immediate predecessor Jane, who was appointed in 2014. There's from federation in 1901 that took to 2014 to have a female secretary of the Central Agency. I mean I feel I'm very delighted to be in that role, in my journey to be in that role probably wasn't necessarily a common journey into Central Agency land while I started my career as a graduate in PMNC many, many, many years ago.

My career has been broadly in the health and social policy area. For me as the 27 odd years that I've had in the Commonwealth, I think around 20 of those years has been spent in sort of health and social policy, including time in a minister's office as well. I was five years in ministers' offices, so I wouldn't see myself as a leader who's come through the Central Agency world. I guess I brought that when I came to finance and I started there as a deputy in 2013, managing budget group. I brought my lived experience to that role and I still carry that today as I'm sure we all do as we go into those roles.

I mean for me and coming from a Central Agency view point, Central Agencies have really privileged roles within government. We're very close to all the decisions that get taken. We have that sort of privilege of being able to see the whole of government view. We have the opportunity to give a strategic advice, and to me I guess what I've brought to that is that experience of being in a line agency. Being involved in programme implementation about seeing the challenges around how you actually implement policies, understanding the engagement with stakeholders that are so fundamental for policy development to be effective and for the right feedback loops to be incorporated into policy development.

I think certainly the way that we seek to approach our privilege role in finance is to bring that, the importance of collaboration and effective partnerships to that role. We talk about that a lot in the department. I mean my mantra is that, as a Central Agency you're as effective as your relationships. You can't actually do anything really on your own. We don't hold the data that you need to be able to inform very effective policy development in decision making. You don't have the relationships, the frontline relationships with stakeholders. To develop those frontline relationships well from time to time, you can certainly develop some of those, you can't overtake the role of a line agency so you're not going to have the same depth of engagement if you have in a line agency.

We really rely on the effectiveness of those collaborations and partnerships. To me that's absolutely fundamental in terms of how we're effective. We've done a lot of work within finance and it's really come from our leadership group. When I talk about leadership group, I think everyone's a leader. Everyone in the organisation, almost everyone has some leadership responsibility. Whether they're supervising one person or if they're supervising hundreds of people, they have leadership responsibilities and they need to think about their roles as leaders. We've engaged our latest throughout the organisations around the behaviours that they think are appropriate leadership behaviours. They came up with behaviours which are strongly endorsed, which is really around being part of the solution. Which is, when you're in the finance portfolio, I think that's a really important message. Actually, don't just point out the problems, but actually work to collaborate and be part of what a compromise or a different set of arrangements might be.

Being collaborative and innovative in what we do as a second. The third is really development responsibility, so develop self, develop others is our third leadership behaviour. Karen knows this very well, because when we were together in finance, we talked about this a lot with the team. Take responsibility for your own development. I think at every point in everyone's journey, we all need to continue to think about how we develop ourselves, how we open ourselves up to different experiences and take time with staff to enable those development discussions to occur.

That's the sort of environment that we hope that we have in finance. I think Renee mentioned the APS transformation work and I think that's a good example of that in practise. It had a little bit of attention recently, but the secretaries have been working together now for some time. It's probably only now beginning to get a little bit of attention, but we've been working as a sub-committee of secretaries' board for probably the last 18 months or so, working on IPS modernization and transformation ideas. The difference with this model is that, everyone who's around that table has skin in the game. Basically, the each of the secretaries is paired up with another and they're leading particular work streams and the work streams are actually in budget paper number four. They've been published and they're bringing resources from their own organisations to that work. There's a great deal of ownership engagement around that, and I think the proof in that will be, what's the sort of sustainable change that we can drive through the work that we're doing, whether it's around shared services or better understanding what productivity means in the public

sector in bringing data to there, what aspirations we have for our workforce and how we're building mobility in the workforce, so a whole range of things.

I'm sure I'm going too long, so just to finish off and I'm sure we'll come back to some of these things in the discussion. I talked about that I've had a lot of line agency experience, but I've also had time outside the public sector and worked as a consulting business and I too have had three kids. Now fortunately adults, but certainly took a lot of my attention when they were younger. I think that having that diversity of experience is really critical in terms of the leader who you can be and having that being able to stand in other people's shoes and bring that perspective to any discussion really and any problem.

I really encourage that in my organisation, when we're putting some structured ways to encourage mobility. There's not enough mobility across the public sector, people tend to stay in one agency for way too long in my view. We need to find that balance between getting a bit of experience and having technical expertise and that's a tricky balance. I'd say in terms of what I hold dear as a leader, I think communication. To me communication's absolutely fundamental and you can't communicate enough to your team. It doesn't matter how big your team is in a sense. Communicate not just about process, but also about the strategic and the vision and the future and the why. Also, giving people the opportunity to communicate back, so it's not a one-way street, it's actually about listening to people's views and opening up opportunities in the organisation for that two-way communication.

We talk about productivity and improving work processes. Well the people who know best about that in the organisation are the people who are doing it on the ground. You have to find ways to really empower them to have a voice in the organisation. I will just reiterate Renee's point, we're all members of a team and you're as effective as your team basically. Whether it's as a secretary with the team that is our organisation and our leadership team or whether it's individuals in your own teams. I think really taking time and effort into building the team around you and building diversity in that team is absolutely essential I think to be successful.

Penny Williams:

Thank you, so thanks very much Rosemary. Last but not least, Kathy.

Kathy Leigh:

Thank you. I'd like to just turn around so I'm not back to front. I'd like to start by acknowledging the normal people and being the head of the ACT Public Service, I always like to particularly acknowledge the contribution that all the Aboriginal and [inaudible] on the members of our service make to the quality of the advice we provide to our ministers and the service we provide out to our community. I'd also like to echo a comment Renee made, how proud I am to be a public servant. There's no other role where you can have the intellectual challenges that we have in addressing all the issues we face. The satisfaction of knowing that by definition what you're doing is in the best interest of your community, because we're advising a government that's been elected by that community. I think that's an incredibly satisfying role to have and something that we should all get up and shout about and celebrate a lot more.

I'd also like to particularly say how proud I am about ACT Public Service. We're very small and yet we cover an incredibly wide range of responsibilities. If you just think about, it's everything from international trade and investment to grow the ACT economy, common stayed arrangements, whole suite of policy advice and human rights, through to service delivery, providing services to the most normal people in our community and so many, many more areas. Which brings me to the first point I wanted to talk about in terms of leadership and it's the word that everybody has mentioned so far, which is collaboration.

To me that is the only effective model for leadership. I've talked previously that it prevents about how you achieve collaboration. It's something we've really focused on in the ACT and operating as one service. I've talked previously about mobility as a key factor in achieving it, so I won't talk about that today, although I do think that's very important. I think structures drive outcome so often I thought it was worth reflecting a little on the structure of the public service that can achieve collaboration.

In the ACT for a number of years now, we've organised our administrative arrangements in the way that the Commonwealth just recently did with its most recent log. In that, we have not assumed that we organise the public service to align with ministerial portfolios. It's a very sensible approach, because the reason why ministers allocate particular portfolios draws in a whole range of reasons, which aren't necessarily the reasons why it's most efficient for a public service to be organised in a certain way. In the ACT, instead of having directorates responsible up to one minister, there's almost not a director general who doesn't have multiple ministers they're responsible for and there's no minister who doesn't have multiple directors general.

I think people are fundamentally irrational and if you say you're accountable of this silo to this minister, with all the goodwill in the world towards our colleagues, that's how we behave. By having those multiple accountabilities across the service, both up for directors general and down for ministers, you create a real incentive to operate on a whole of government basis. I think that's been a really useful approach that we've evolved overtime. The more we've done it, the more I've realised the significance of it in driving an efficient public service. I'd like to first of all to mention that.

The other thing I thought I'd mention in relation to collaboration is going back to the role of the Central Agency. As we said, I've worked in agencies that have had both aligned responsibility and the whole of government responsibility. When I was coming to my current role, I thought about what is it that makes a Central Agency really effective? It struck me that central agencies often are assumed to be really powerful, but in fact they need line agencies much more than line agencies need them. How are you going to get line agencies to really, it's true. If you just face up to that, then you go think about, well, instead of line agencies hiding because they are afraid of what that central agency might do to them and feel threatened by it, how can you actually operate in a way that means that line agencies will see an advantage in collaborating with central agencies?

One of the very first things I did when I came to my role was, I said, "Okay, those briefs that we provide to the chief minister for cabinet, they're to be shared with the relevant director general." I know there's a whole cabinet process to develop cabinet submissions and you would think that all the differences of you should be flashed out during that process. In my experience, the briefing that departments provide to their ministers just before cabinet is really significant in terms of the quality of debate in that cabinet room.

By requiring the central agency that was saying to the chief minister, this is good or bad, requiring that to be shared with the relevant director general meant that people were being tested. Were our views really valued or had we actually overlooked something? Had the relevant directorate really thought through the issue or is there more that they should be saying to their minister? If there was a fundamental difference that required a policy choice by ministers, well were we providing the most rigorous advice to our ministers so that that debate in the cabinet room could be a really thorough high level debate? I think that was probably one of the great things I did right at the beginning. It sent a signal across the whole service about a whole range of just about the attitude and the way we would operate. I think it significantly improved the quality of advice we were giving to ministers just overnight quite simply.

They're just two examples I thought I'd give you about concrete things that one can do in a public service to improve that collaboration. I won't say anything about communication. I was going to. I agree that it's the most important thing that we can do in terms of achieving outcomes, you achieve nothing without that. Given our theme today, I'd just like to reflect a little bit on diversity and in particular gender equality. We all know and we all accept that the strongest organisations are diverse organisations. We all go around saying it. As Kathy said, I was the first female appointed to this role. Well it's fantastic in the ICT we have six of our nine directors general are women. In the Commonwealth we've got 50-50, that's fantastic, but you know it really is something that we're just achieving.

When I first came to this role, I was welcomed by Ian Watt the co ed group as improving their gender balance from zero to one. There had been previous heads of those ministers' departments at the States, but they had gone backwards, there were none. I'm happy to say that now there are three out of nine heads of first ministers' departments across Australia who are women. It shows you just, on the one hand it's fantastic where we've gotten to. On the other hand, we're really only just getting there. It's felt like it's taken an incredibly long time to get here, and there's still lots of pockets of unevenness. I think there are so many very practical things that we can do to try to lock it in.

One thing I particularly liked to mention given some of the debates at the moment on public service reform is our public service election processes. I know it's really fashionable right now to bag them and talk about how bureaucratic they are. I think that they are one of the most important things that we do as public services to ensure that we have a better record than the private sector on diversity in our services. They are actually founded on approach to an objective assessment of who is going to be the best performer in the role. It's an objective

assessment of what capabilities are required. We have processes that ensure or endeavour to ensure as much as possible that we're not just making unconscious assumptions. I'd like to put in a real plug for everyone who's getting carried along through ball of rhetoric about how these are bureaucratic and old fashioned, to just stop and reflect. We can always improve them, but I would really hate to see them thrown out.

There are a number of other things that we take as accepted, but actually when I look at them, I think we could improve a lot. Mat leave, you know we all accept that in management theory. You'd involve the things you want to influence people's behaviour, so replace health and safety. Devolve the cost of workplace of workers compensation so that the areas that are best placed to prevent injury hid the message and do something. A lot of organisations still develop mat leave down, right down to the local area, and they do it mindlessly along with annual leave and sick leave, which is whether it's good reason to do it. I challenge you all to go back to your organisations and check how it's done.

I have found in the past small organisations that happen to have a high profile of women whose budgets were severely affected and all I needed to do was pull the mat leave across the large organisation. Actually, the budgets were being allocated according to government priorities rather than according to this arbitrary issue of the profile of the particular workforce. As I say, that's still something you find in most places. There is flexibility in workplaces. We keep talking about it, we all accept it, but boy I still see a lot of areas that find it hard. We really do need to just bite the bullet and get on with it. I think there are a number of concrete things that are very basic and practical that we all accept as given and yet that we can push on with. I won't say anything about personal leadership issues and I'm happy to pick that up in question time. I would say it's fantastic where we've gotten to, but let's not rest on our laurels.

Penny Williams:

Thanks, thanks very much Kathy and thank you for that reminder at the end, which is sort of where I was starting from, I suppose about the little experience of most people in our organisation is not over the last three or four years is we've been making this. It sort of contradicts almost their experiences that it is difficult to be promoted when you're part-time. It is unusual to have a woman secretary. It is, and it makes it that cultural change pace so much more difficult and in some of those are the little tools that we have to use. I thank all of you. I've got so many questions and so many reflections, but we're not meeting our timelines.

Instead of kind of doing that, what I'm going to do is actually open up to questions, so we can use the next 20 minutes to ask those burning questions that you have in your mind. If I can ask you to please state your name and department when asking a question and indicate if there's a specific speaker you'd like to address the question. I'm not going to, so we can get as many questions in as possible. I'm not going to ask each of them to address, to answer each question. I'll take them in ones to start with, but if they look like you're taking up too much time, I'll start bunching them in threes.

Ruth: Ruth [inaudible] from the Department of Infrastructure. I just wanted to ask, you've acknowledged that there are now 50-50 women secretaries. What do you think is the next cultural change that needs to happen? How do you think the language around that goal needs to change?

Renee Leon: I'll have a go at one, the cultural change. I think based on some of the things Kathy said I won't be alone in this. Which is that, the whole commitment to flexible work has to become much more the norm rather than some special thing we do for women. I think at the moment the fact that we all struggle with the impact that having children has on our lives, sanity, career, domestic happiness.

Rosemary H.: Enriching is the word.

Renee Leon: Yeah, enriching is the word I was looking for, yeah. The next generation has to get reproduced and at the moment women are doing all the work around that. Frankly men are missing out on much of the joy as well, because they're not being as much part of it as we are. I think the next cultural shift we have to see is a much more equal sharing of the responsibilities outside work. There are somethings we can all do in our own departments to encourage that, that creating a culture where men can work part-time and there's no raised eyebrows and there's no why would you want to do that, and there's no different treatment of men and women around flexible work.

Although this is probably bold of me to say, because of it is a policy question, I think there are policy things we could learn from other countries that have actually made parental leave some of it only accessible if the other partner takes it. It starts to normalise at a societal level that yeah, they'll be men with prams and men in the moms and bubs club will actually be a parent and bubs club. They'll be men at the yoga class and the playschool and all of that, so that it's societal no longer seen as unusual for men to share family responsibility. I think that will make a huge difference to diversity at work as well.

Petra: Hi I'm Petra from EPR. I'm just curious all this talk about flexible working arrangements. Have any of you ever worked flexibly or part-time and obviously kept your career going? If you have, can you comment on how you've kept your career going while working part-time or other flexible arrangements?

Rosemary H.: I'm going to answer that one Renee. Would you want, [inaudible]?

Renee Leon: I worked part-time as a branch head. In fact, I worked part-time as a branch head for Kathy. It was very unusual, and it was very difficult, and I think the department as a whole learned from it. First of all, I worked part-time as a branch head for my first child and it was against some resistance from my then male manager. When I had my second child it was made clear to me that wasn't going to be okay. Actually no part-time can't work here and Kathy said who was a division head in the same department said, "Well, I can make it work." I voted with my feet and went to work for a manager who won't help me make it work and downsized the job to making achievable in part-time.

It's not to say it's not still difficult. One of the things that I learned, and the department learned from that is you really probably need to formally job share the other part of the time. Now in my current department, I've got SES who work part-time, but someone acts up for the days that they're not in. It's a development opportunity for them plus they're not trying to do five days' work in three days. I guess the proof of the pudding is I did still end up becoming a secretary, but there certainly were many days where I went, well, I've hit the glass ceiling and I'm never going to get promoted ever again, because this is so hard to make it work. I think we just have to make it much easier to make it work. We have to have not that kind of, "I can't be down in management jobs because you need to be, can't be there in minister facing jobs, can't be there in public facing jobs." We just have to make it work and every job will have a different thing that will make it work, but we should make it work.

Rosemary H.:

I also worked part-time I'd say between kids. I think because I was in then the health community services, there are a lot of strong women in that organisation. I think it was, you could have that conversation, I mean it's a long time ago, now it was in '94 was the year that I worked part-time. I was working four days a week.

It was hard, and I think in part it was my own expectations about what I brought to the role and then what I was doing with my son and whether I was able to manage all that to my expectation, but it happened. I think it sort of worked okay. After I had twins though I actually made a decision to go and do something completely different, which is when I left the public service and I did more consulting work that gave me a lot more flexibility. My circumstance was probably a little bit unique in that I had a lot of children in a very short space of time. It was a little bit challenging at that point and I was also a band one when that was happening. I think that Renee is right, the challenge is how do you create an environment where that becomes the norm? That's more than 20 year ago and it was happening then, and a lot and we had to work hard to get it to happen, but really by now that should be a much more normalised set of arrangements. Yeah, I agree.

Kathy Leigh:

I might just make a comment, because it used to be my secret weapon for attracting good staff. Wow, you know like I've always found that part-time staff they're focused, they're there. They're not there for social occasion. To me it was a no brainer, but I do think there are lots of creative ways of making it work. One of the things that I learned after Renee was, you don't even have to do a strict job share. What you can do is you can divide up the job.

If you're at the SES level, there are strategic roles where you don't need to be there every day. Then there might be the more day to day responsibilities, you can allocate, you can give somebody a part performance promotion role and give them the five days a week including when the person who's part-time is present. Give them a five days a week role in managing those day to day things and give the person who's part-time the strategic responsibilities that can wait till the next week.

There are so many ways you can do it and it just requires a bit of stepping back and creativity and not being lazy about thinking that the way it's done when it's full-time needs to be somehow mirrored when it's part-time.

Maxine Ewens: Hello, my names Maxine Ewens and I'm the CIO of Food Department and Communication in the Arts. Off the back of the previous question and just a couple of things I'm wondering is, what are you considering or doing in your organisations to increase women in IT and particularly the CIOs? I think there's less than five of us across the Commonwealth.

Kathy Leigh: Yeah. Well I just appointed my CTO on merit and that meant it was a woman, so that fixed that.

Rosemary H.: I think in finance, actually we've got a pretty good track record in terms of the number of women who are involved in our sort of ICT areas. We've got I think in fact three, we had three branch heads who were women, one of whom has been on [inaudible] to the DTI. I think we've got two branch heads who are women. We need to focus on that through, what's the graduate intake look like as well and what's the diversity that we're getting, coming right back to what women are doing in terms of ICT?

I think two there's having ICT skills and data skills that we really need those more broadly than in dedicated ICT areas. I mean increasingly we're going to see work framed around the capacity to engage with IT and the capacity to engage with data, so we need that richness of skill more broadly. I think everyone needs to have it, so the question in part is about also how do you develop and empower women to be fully operating in that world so that their places entrenched in the future as well. I mean I think that we're doing, there's quite a lot of work around the ICT graduates that are looking to try and bring in more women into that role. Again, I think it's something that requires eternal vigilance.

Kathy Leigh: To be more serious I think I mentioned earlier that well we might have achieved certain good records, there are still certain unevenness and that's one of the clear examples. I spoke a little while ago at an Australian Internet Industry Association lunch that were particular keen on how we improve women in IT. We looked at how we could perhaps work together on trying to raise the profile of what the opportunities are.

To give you a different example that I think we might be able to apply across, I don't think it's good enough to just say, "Oh well, we put out an ad and all the applicants were male, so what can we do?" In a different sphere in the ICT in our emergency management area, I was really impressed. We had almost no female firers in the ICT. Our emergency management area stopped and said, "Well, where are they? Where are the places where women who might enjoy these roles, where would we find them?" They went out to gyms and put out posters, have you thought about this as a career? They had a try before you buy days, so women could come along and hold the fire horse and hold the equipment and go, "Actually I can do this."

As a result, in the following recruit college, we ended up recruiting 25% women, every single one of those women passed all the physical requirements that had always existed. All it was, was about getting more women to say, "Hey, actually I could do that. I could enjoy that." I think a bit more of that stepping back and thinking, "Where are the women, why don't they apply in this area? What is it that's stopping them thinking that this is a job for them?" Going out proactively and identifying why actually it is a job for them, I think that's what we have to do.

Renee Leon: Then I might just add the one last thing, which is that it's about the expectation you set on your senior leaders as well. I regularly say in my CIO groups, "What are you doing about gender? What are you doing about graduates? What are you doing about development? What are you doing about lateral transfers?" They know that's the expectation and in fact in DHS which has over 4000 IT staff, we're at about 37% women now, which is way ahead of commercial. It's still not good enough, but you put the expectation on the executive and it's in their kind of performance agreement, they'll make an effort.

Speaker 9: I thought I'd better take one for this side of the room. [inaudible], I'm here from the ACT PS. If you had one piece of homework, we could all take away with us today to take back to our own roles, what would that advice be?

Penny Williams: Looking at, maybe with Kathy starting.

Kathy Leigh: Okay, so given I didn't talk at all when I was speaking about individual women and if you're thinking about your own career, then I would just say that that cliché about how a man sees a job and thinks, "I can do 50% of that job I'll apply." A woman says, "I can do 95% really well with that 5% on only average," and doesn't apply, I see it happen in reality. My bit of homework for everyone would be to reflect on your strengths and think about opportunities and put yourself forward. Go and talk to somebody about areas you might be interested in, take some step yourself to think about what the opportunities are.

Rosemary H.: I very much agree with that and I think a sort of corollary of that is, don't be afraid to do hard things and to embrace the challenge. I mean I would say in my career that I've learned more through the struggle, through the mistake than I've learned through just getting on and doing the job and sort of the normal skim of things. Be brave and bold and willing and then be reflective, because you really do need to think about, be sort of in the moment and think about what you're doing and learning through an experience.

If I can have another one Renee is through that you need to trust your gut instinct I think. I mean that sort of expression about trusting your gut I think is vastly underrated. Your gut actually tells you what your lived experience has developed for you overtime and so just having that ear to, I'm I worried about this? Should I pause, should I be cautious? You need to listen to that voice and sort of consider they're both parts of the same coin in a sense.

Renee Leon: I completely endorse what my colleagues have said. I guess I would say that what probably made me a feminist was my girls school principle who taught us

that, who was Freda Whitlam, so you can imagine she was a formidable character. She really taught us and expected us to believe that girls can do anything. We all should carry that with us into our day and not mark ourselves down.

The only corollary I'd add to that because I'm a feminist is that, it's not just about us. It's not just about fixing our own attitudes that actually the system we're in does need to change. We all need to be activists for the change that we want to see. My homework for everyone would be to just look around your organisation and see whether it measures up to the future state that equality and diversity and inclusion would have us see. To the extent that it doesn't, get involved in something to change that.

Penny Williams:

Thank you. Thank you very much. Can I Renee, Rosemary, Kathy, thank you so much for joining us today and for being part of this series. It seems to me that you've given these valuable reflections on contemporary leadership in a really complex place that we find ourselves. I was sitting here wondering, would secretaries describe leadership and the leadership challenge in the same way 20 years ago or 10 years ago? I suspect not. I mean collaboration, team, thinking about self-diversity of, I mean this was the same thing, diversity of experience really came out strongly in the fact that both Renee and Kathy have worked across the Commonwealth and also into the territory government has just been really fascinating I think.

You've also taken us into the future and also been really honest about sharing your own personal experiences, which I think is what people really like to reflect on the challenges there, the struggles their secretaries have experienced those too. It's really great to be able to think about and to have homework and to think about what it means for us and for what it means for us as an APS, but what it also means for individual staff as they think about their own careers and their own leadership challenges.