

Ann Sherry – Opening Remarks

Gender Equality and the Future of Work event

MCC Founding Members and STEM Groups event, 2 November 2018, 7.15-9.30am

Foundation Hall, Museum of Contemporary Art, Circular Quay

Welcome

- ◆ As the Convener of the Male Champions of Change in STEM, it is a great pleasure to welcome you to this event on Gender Equality and the Future of Work.
- ◆ Thank you to Craig Madden for his welcome to country - I'd like to particularly acknowledge the important leadership and contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to STEM and our nation.
- ◆ I'd like to welcome our growing MCC community, including our conveners, members, your leaders and our partners. I'd also like to recognise we have with us today Australia's Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Kate Jenkins, who is also a Convener of the MCC national group, established in 2015.

Why the future of work?

- ◆ Every leader – across sectors and organisation types – is grappling with how the trends we are experiencing – technological disruption, demographic change, shifting social expectations about work and increasing customer expectations - are impacting on how we work, where we work, what we do and how we learn.
- ◆ There is a lot being said about the future of work across different arenas – from the WEF to our own parliament. But it is all a bit general, all a bit vague, and very little of it is dealing with the question of gender – how are the future disruptions like to impact on gender equality?
- ◆ The STEM and Founding MCC groups have come together to come up with some challenging questions and ideas to stimulate a discussion on gender equality and the future of work.
- ◆ The discussion on the future of work is essentially about how we deal with change - the change that is happening in the world around us, and the change that we have the power to affect. Change is not new to us as leaders, but the scale and speed of the change we are experiencing is new. By understanding, anticipating and being

responsive to change we can harness the opportunities ahead – which there are plenty – and mitigate the risks.

Key issues

- ◆ No-one can predict exactly what the future will look like and there are diverse views on how the Future of Work will unfold. But we do know that the Future of Work is primarily a human issue. While everyone will be affected in different ways, our lens is on gender equality.
- ◆ Important progress has been made towards gender equality in Australian workplaces but there remain significant challenges that we are working to solve – the gender pay gap, women’s under-representation in leadership, women’s low participation in STEM roles and the fact that women continue to do the lion’s share of caring work. Our employment rate of women aged 25-54 years is amongst the lowest across OECD countries.
- ◆ The problem for the future of work is that we are not starting from a level playing field and our experience shows that this is not a problem that will correct itself without intentional action. The question for us as leaders is: will we let existing gender inequalities be replicated or exacerbated for future generations on our watch?
- ◆ The future of work is also unfolding against a backdrop where expectations and accountability around gender equality is increasing.
- ◆ The #MeToo movement has provided a platform for women and men to share their stories of sexism, harassment and rape in the workplace - in ways many thought would never be possible.
- ◆ For so long an issue that no one said or did anything about, we are all now challenged to create safe workplaces first and foremost, with clear policies and real consequences for people who cross the line.
 - A national inquiry into the issue is now underway led by Kate Jenkins.
 - At the same time, women are aspiring to and breaking barriers in careers and roles that have traditionally been male-dominated.
 - They are also demanding equal pay.
 - And more men are seeking an equal role in the lives and upbringing of their children.
- ◆ Thinking about our workforce of the future, we are not going to fix our current problems by doing the same. In fact, we need to take advantage of the change that is upon us to break the structures that have perpetuated gender inequality.
- ◆ Imagine if we used this disruption to: accelerate progress on women’s balance in leadership roles; breakdown gender segregation across occupations and industries; get

more women into STEM; close the gender pay gap and create more inclusive and respectful environments? Imagine if we created a gender equal future of work?

- ◆ In this room, you are here because you have the influence to drive change. This means starting by asking the right questions, looking under the bonnet to see the problems that are there, and experimenting with bold action to drive change.
- ◆ Today you will hear from a number of leaders across the Founding and STEM MCC groups who are – in true MCC style – listening, learning and experimenting with action – to create a gender equal future of work.

Acknowledgements

- ◆ Before we move ahead with the rest of the program, I'd like to acknowledge that the work of the MCC STEM group is supported by the Australian Government under the National Innovation and Science Agenda. We are grateful for the partnership and priority given to increasing women's representation in STEM.
- ◆ We have been fortunate to have the support of Gary Wingrove and his team at KPMG on this topic.
- ◆ Finally, I'd like to thank the two leaders who have sponsored this work amongst the MCCs – Bob Easton from Accenture and Joanne Farrell from Rio Tinto.