



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

PATHWAY TO POLITICS PROGRAM FOR WOMEN ALUMNI RECEPTION

Tuesday 25th February 2020

The Hon Julia Gillard AC, Former Prime Minister

Ms Juliana Addison MP, Representing the Premier of Victoria

Ms Carol Schwartz AO, Chair, Pathway to Politics Program Advisory Committee

Professor John Howe, Director, Melbourne School of Government

Members of Parliament

Pathway to Politics Program Alumni

All our distinguished guests

First, I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land upon which we are gathering and pay my respects to their Elders past and present and to any Elders here with us.

I note that I am acknowledging not only the world's oldest continuous living culture, but also a culture in which the wisdom of women is so very often front and centre.

It is with great pleasure that Tony and I welcome you all to Government House to celebrate women in another context. That is, the University of Melbourne's *Pathway to Politics Program*.

We welcome the accomplished alumni in the room, and the speakers, facilitators and supporters who have contributed to the Program's success.

We are delighted to be joined by The Hon Julia Gillard AC and will look forward to hearing from her shortly.

No-one in our nation is better equipped to talk of women in politics than our former Prime Minister: Australia's only female Prime Minister and a leader who has contributed and is contributing so much to public life, especially - for this evening's purpose - as the inaugural Chair of the Global Institute for Women's Leadership at Kings College London.

I am conscious that this is not an audience that needs any persuasion as to why it matters that women are still under-represented in leadership roles.

Certainly, this has been a topic of interest throughout my career - now spanning many decades - and yet, here we are in this tremendously lucky country in 2020, and we still count many of our female leaders in the ones - or not much more than that.

One female Prime Minister, one State Premier in Victoria, one female Governor-General, and one Victorian Governor. Too few ASX Chairs and Executives. Too few in so many other spheres that you don't need me to list here.

And, certainly still too few having a voice in our parliaments and other elected offices. We know the statistics.

Although we can be particularly proud that in the Victorian Parliament women comprise 50% of the Ministry, we know that overall, our State Parliaments are still not where they need to be. And in the Federal Parliament the percentage of women is only 32%. That means Australia hovers around 50th in the world in the rankings.

Of course we need to elect from our whole talent pool. We need our leaders to represent us all.

We know that every discussion, every decision, every problem's solution is better made or better found when there are different voices and perspectives mixed into the process.

Several years ago now, I chose the topic of some of my favourite speeches as the subject for an oration.

In addition to referring to a certain famous '*misogyny speech*' of world renown, I quoted Dame Enid Lyons, widow of Prime Minister Joseph Lyons, mother of twelve and the first woman elected to our House of Representatives.

I am confident that many of you are familiar with her maiden speech, delivered on 29 September 1943, in a voice not previously heard in that place.

She started by acknowledging that any woman entering the public arena must '*attack the same problems*' and be '*prepared to shoulder the same burdens*' as a man. But she boldly announced that hers would be a different voice. She forewarned that in decision-making she would consider the effect on home and family life – explaining that

'Every subject, from high finance to international relations, from social security to the winning of the war, touches very closely the home and the family.'

Not everyone of us would frame things in those terms. But they were terms of those times, and they were brave. What a legacy Dame Enid left.

This evening gives me the welcome opportunity to thank everyone who is helping another generation of women to find the skills necessary to successfully seek public office. To build their own legacies.

Thank you to Carol Schwartz AO, the Founding Chair of the Women's Leadership Institute Australia who, together with her husband Alan and their four children, established the Trawalla Foundation, a founding partner in this Program, along with the Women's Leadership Institute Australia and the University of Melbourne University.

Carol, you shine in so many aspects of leadership in this State, and beyond, and we are delighted that you have agreed to sit with our former PM this evening, for the brief *Q and A*. Another act of your generosity.

You, and everyone connected to the Program, can take great pride in knowing that there are now some 100 accomplished alumni: women who have completed the Program, some of whom have been successfully elected. And that the Program is now expanding beyond Victoria.

It is important that your alumni and candidates cross the political divide. And I like the fact that some of our nation's most significant women leaders, including former Governor-General Dame Quentin Bryce AD CVO, and former Minister for Foreign Affairs and former Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party Julie Bishop, have stepped in to help other women, alongside the women I have already mentioned.

Finally, good luck to all those who have completed the program. We wish you every success and look forward to following your journeys in politics and public life.