



# St Andrew's College

ESTABLISHED 1867

## IWD Speech SAC Formal Dinner 7 March 2022

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I'd like to start by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we gather today, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. I'd like to pay respect to their elders past, present and emerging and in particular today, to the Gadigal women, the perspectives and inclusion of whom is not only essential, but necessary to achieving gender equality in Australia. And I will touch on their unique experiences later.

I'd like to begin with a short stimulus, which you may have heard before:

"A father and his son are involved in a horrific car crash and the man died at the scene. But when the child arrived at the hospital and was rushed into the operating theatre, the surgeon pulled away and said: "I can't operate on this boy, he's my son."

How can this be, you might ask? Take a moment to think of your response.

When I was first told this, I questioned whether the parents were gay, but was immediately shocked to realise my own subconscious biases.

The surgeon is in fact the son's mother.

This year, the commercial theme for IWD is Break the Bias, which is what I'd like to touch on today.

The reality is that these subconscious biases we have are so loud, and prominent in our everyday lives, that they have impacted career choices, wages, employment stability, and promotion decisions against women for centuries.

I'm not here to make you feel guilty about having subconscious bias. It's been proven that even women can show subconscious gender biases against one another. I'm here to ask you to be aware of them, and hopefully after today, to start noticing them when they pop up, and to address them.

Gendered perceptions often start as a joke. "It's okay if you can't tackle, you're a girl" or "she's only moody because it's that time of the month." But ultimately, these jokes serve to reinforce stereotypes that have an implication on the role and status of women in society.

When you type CEO or CFO in your textbox on your iPhone, notice what the suggested emoji is: a white man in a suit. Even seemingly innocuous things, such as an emoji can reinforce and demonstrate the gender biases inherent in our society. However, most of us wouldn't even notice these subtle stereotypes in the emojis unless we are looking for one that represents us. It is a vicious cycle. These hidden biases feed into such designs, and these images, in turn, propagate such biases.

It is also important to acknowledge that women can also suffer from the "double-bind" bias. Women are often socially and culturally expected to be nurturing and likeable; which in turn may restrict their consideration for a leadership position in certain sectors, while on the other hand, if they are assertive and forthright, they can be deemed unlikable, and too bossy



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to be a good leader. A no-win situation really. I would be lying if I said Pamela, Hannah and I didn't think about this when we were elected and I can guarantee that there are other women in this room who have felt this at some stage in their lives as well.

On an occasion such as this, it is also important to acknowledge that here at St Andrew's, we women are extraordinarily privileged. Living in a wealthy country such as Australia and attending a prestigious university, it is easy to neglect the intersectional experiences of women that are not as privileged. In many countries (including Australia), women are far more disadvantaged; often not only because they are female, but also because they are Indigenous, are a person of colour, a member of the LGBTQIA+ community or experience a disability.

A 2003 study from the University of Chicago, mailed thousands of identical resumes to employers and measured which were called back for interviews. They randomly used stereotypically non-white names on some and stereotypically white names 'like Karen' on others. They were shocked to find that roughly 50% of the resumes were more likely to receive a call back for an interview if it had a "white" name. The résumés were statistically identical. So, when we consider this example, and remember that women are already less likely to be interviewed simply because they are female, a non-white woman is even less likely to receive this opportunity, just because of their name, regardless of abilities.

Until we are capable of truly understanding and engaging with these unique experiences, and serving these women justice, we cannot say that equality has been achieved.

So, as we celebrate 20 years of Women at St Andrew's, this year I implore the women in the room, to really back one another this year. Chicks supporting chicks, regardless of whether you share the same interests – there is nothing more fulfilling than being hyped up by those around you. But further, as a community, we can extend this idea and sense of support across all social, cultural interest groups and demographics.

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