

WA Women's Hall of Fame

2019 Induction Ceremony

Address by the Honourable Kim Beazley AC

Thursday, 7th March 2019

I would firstly like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet – the Wadjuk Noongar people – and pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

Welcome to the Government House Ballroom. Over the past 120 years, many prestigious awards, honours and decorations have been presented in this historic Ballroom. Tonight's group of outstanding inductees will shortly join this tradition of excellence.

To this year's inductees into the WA Women's Hall of Fame – congratulations and thank you. You have all made a difference in your chosen field of endeavour, and your dedication and achievements set a strong example for others to follow.

For eight years, the Hall of Fame has helped us to recognise and celebrate the achievements of 183 extraordinary Western Australian women (past, present and future) across a diverse range of sectors.

Achievements have been recognised in the areas of business, growing industries, leading movements, mentoring, building communities, fundraising, volunteering and providing positive role-models and encouragement to the young women of our future.

Tomorrow is International Women's Day (IWD). I note that the WA Women's Hall of Fame was first established in 2011, the centenary of International Women's Day.

IWD was first observed on 19th March 1911. More than one million women and men attended rallies in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland. In addition to the right to vote and to hold public office, attendees demanded women's rights to work, to vocational training and to an end to discrimination on the job.

108 years later, we still mark this important, awareness-raising day. This year's theme is, 'Balance for Better – Let's build a gender-balanced world'.

IWD expands on this theme to include messages that:

- Balance is not a women's issue, it's a business issue.
- Gender balance is essential for economies and communities to thrive.
- The race is on for the gender-balanced boardroom, a gender-balanced government, gender-balanced media coverage, a gender-balance of employees, more gender-balance in wealth, gender-balanced sports coverage etc.

World-renowned feminist, journalist and activist Gloria Steinem echoed these sentiments about balance when she said,

"The story of women's struggle for equality belongs to no single feminist nor to any one organisation, but to the collective efforts of all who care about human rights."

With the conversation about gender equality gaining more and more momentum, it is important to measure our progress to help inform continued, meaningful change.

So let's examine where our efforts currently place us.

According to the *Workplace Gender Equality Agency* report released last week and generated in collaboration with the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre:

- Women now make up almost 50% of Australia's workforce and hold around 40% of all full-time jobs and 70% of part-time roles.
- Women are progressing into management roles faster than men.
- If the current growth patterns continue, we can expect to see equal representation of women and men in full-time Key Management Personnel roles by 2030, however we will have to wait until 2100 for equal shares of female CEOs.
- The highest paid men are earning at least \$162,000 more than the highest paid women.

Pleasingly though:

- The mining, manufacturing, utilities, transport, postal and warehousing industries have all seen strong growth in female managers across all management tiers.
- It has been found that female representation on the CEO or Board level of companies increases the share of full time and part time female managers.
- Flexible workplaces and employer-funded paid parental leave (PPL) schemes, *"have been found to halve the share of managers who resign during PPL in comparison to those with access to only the Australian Government scheme."*

The key message from the report was principally, whilst great progress has been made there is still some way to go, most particularly in regards to female representation at the Chief Executive level and the pay gap.

On this day I think of my late mother, along with Susie and my daughters Jessica, Hannah and Rachel – the most influential women in my life.

My mother had powerful sayings for me – 'Wear life like a loose robe', 'Fears are liars'.

She was a ward of legacy, a great athlete, a world record holder, President of the Australian Women's Amateur Athletic Association, the first WA woman to secure a Diploma of Physical Education from Melbourne University and Sports mistress at Perth Mod. The latter position she was forced to leave on marriage.

She was a direct contemporary, admirer and friend of today's posthumous inductee Decima Norman. Likewise disadvantaged by the cancelled Olympics of 1940 and 1944. However, perhaps not so much. Decima was a sprinter. Mum was 880 excluded from the Olympics I understand, in the 1930's after incidents in the 20's which caused some in officialdom to argue the distance unsuitable for women. Like Decima, she retired in 1948.

She was marvellous, selfless mother. I wonder though how her life would have been if she had those achievements in the 1980's and 90's, rather than the 30's and 40's. I had a small experience of that in 1960 at the Commonwealth Games here in Perth. There she, rather than Dad, was the notable Beazley guest.

Congratulations once again to this year's group of worthy recipients into the WA Women's Hall of Fame.

What a powerful group they are. As we read about their achievements we see the heart of what makes us a vibrant, effective community but one that is realistic about our flaws.

Collectively, you can be proud of the standards of excellence you have achieved across the areas of small business, engineering, law, health and disability services, mining, Aboriginal heritage and education, the public sector, education and more.

I encourage everyone to consider nominating someone for next year's Hall of Fame. Additionally, you might also consider nominating that person for an Order of Australia, as part of the Australian Honours system.

Thank you to the WA Women's Hall of Fame committee for the work you do in bringing this event together.

I wish all of you a wonderful evening.