

IWD ANU Morning Tea March 8, 2018 9.30-1130

Common Room University House

Changing the Culture of Gender at ANU

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[Acknowledgement of country, and especially acknowledge and pay respects to Indigenous women and to all Indigenous people with us today. It is important that IWD celebrates the diversity of women and acknowledges the way in which gender powerfully intersects with class, race, religion, sexuality, disability. Press for Progress]

I start by troubling that concept of culture in our panel title. As an anthropologist of Oceania I am painfully aware of the debated history of the culture concept in that discipline. Cultures are created, contested and changing. And those processes of creation, contestation and change are powerfully gendered and saturated with power. As Sally Engle Merry has so bluntly asked in her writing on gender violence and human rights. Who speaks for culture? Hopefully not just powerful older men.

In confronting the culture of gender at ANU we have to think about how gender inequalities are embedded in our everyday practices that go way *beyond* the formal structures of our institution – how our research, education and outreach is organised, how policies and protocols govern what we do, and even beyond those expansive visions of excellence and equity that feature in our latest and in my view our greatest strategic plan. We have to embed these grand ideas in our daily lives.

In trying to redress gendered inequalities between staff, the success of the ongoing SAGE process will be important– not just in winning a

a bronze award but in being honest and reflective in that process, in admitting errors and obstacles and in creating everyday practices that will effect *real* cultural change towards gender equality at ANU now, and in the decades to come.

From the work already done and reported in the document *A Picture of the Institution* we know the broad lineaments of how staff, men and women are situated at the various levels of the academic hierarchy and how what is a majority of women students can translate into a mere 24% overall amongst full professors (in 2015 38% in my School in CAP, 2% in Crawford). We also know that there are particular hotspots where women's absence is palpable – in physics and engineering, in philosophy and economics, especially at higher levels. These differences are not just between the sciences and the humanities and social sciences disciplines, between STEM and HASS but *within* STEM and *within* HASS. So in natural sciences there are dramatic differences between the biological sciences and physics and engineering while in HASS there are large gaps between history, anthropology and sociology and philosophy, politics and economics. Within my own College of Asia and the Pacific the two extremes are Regnet which has a predominance of women at all levels and the Crawford School which despite a recently appointed and energetic woman director and welcome recent promotions of women to professorial status, there are still far more men, and they are especially concentrated at more senior levels.

Numbers are important and it is crucial to have targets like 50/50 in *any* workplace – be it a government department, private corporation, an NGO, even at Parliament House (A number of us heard Tanya Plibsek yesterday at the National Press Club about the difference there is between the Labor Party (women MPs at 47%) and the Coalition Parties (at 23%) when both started from a base of 14% a decade or so ago. It is crucial to look at how our policies and protocols of recruitment, promotion and retention may be

implicated but it is also important to *go beyond the numbers* to look at other compelling manifestations of a gender unequal culture e.g. the gender pay gap, gender differentials in our concentration on work, research, education and service (despite the actual role statement) and the differential rewards ensuing from that. Many inequalities derive from the relation between the *workplace and domestic life* – those practical protocols about the timing of classes and events, the availability of late arrival parking, the provision of quality, accessible and well signposted breastfeeding and parenting spaces, the terms of parental leave and the right to flexible working hours so that women (and even men) can combine paid work with the joys and burdens of caring for children, the sick and the elderly, and not assuming that university work at nights and weekends and the electronic pulse of perpetual availability is the norm.

But it is also important to look at what universities do. *Our primary purpose is to create and disseminate knowledge, to learn and to teach.* There are clearly ways in which knowledge is gendered and this pertains to the content of the knowledge and to the prevailing norms of academic value and excellence. Recent work being done by colleagues is exploring these more subtle and complex ways in which certain fields embrace or extrude women and feminist approaches. We talk about warm and chilly climates for women in different disciplines and terrains of knowledge and I fear unlike our planet the climate for women in universities is not getting warmer everywhere.

Finally, I want to turn to that appalling fact about university life – here at the ANU and across Australia and the world – the prevalence of sexual violence, both sexual assault and harassment. The 2017 report of the Australian Human Rights Commission *Change the Course* was disturbing reading (although not unexpected for the student activists and the academic and professional staff long engaged with the problem). On the basis of both quantitative and qualitative research that report found that: one in 5 students were

sexually harassed in 2016, that 1.6% of students were sexually assaulted, that women were three times more likely than men to be sexually assaulted and twice as likely as men to be sexually harassed. Importantly those most likely to be assaulted and harassed were gay and gender diverse students, and though the statistics were rather less robust, Indigenous students. Even more disturbing was that of those who were 94 % of those sexually harassed and 87% of those sexually assaulted did *not* make a formal report or complaint to the university. (Reasons?)

The ANU's program of Respectful Relationships is working to effect real change – as Kate Jenkins our Sex Discrimination Commissioner stressed in the Pamela Denoon lecture on Monday night this means not just making processes of disclosure, reporting, counselling and redress more accessible and less traumatic for those abused but also to *prevent* such sexual violence happening in the first place. This means encouraging a culture of respect and consent in all relationships, between students, between staff and crucially between students and staff. We need to harmonise our codes of conduct for all of us. Patterns of sexual conduct are not just private personal matters but are integral to academic culture and absolutely central to achieving real gender equality at ANU. I sometimes feel that we are more punitive to perpetrators of plagiarism than perpetrators of sexual assault and harassment. Sexual violence is fundamentally connected to gender equality – both are fundamentally manifestations of toxic power relations. When I first arrived here in 1983 when my daughter was 10 months old, I found the Research School of Pacific Studies a cauldron of male domination – there was only one tenured senior woman in RSPAS and there was a brew of misogynist bullying and sexual harassment from senior men. Things have changed since – but not enough. I see this present moment as a prime time for real cultural change at ANU – not just with the SAGE project and the Respectful Relationships program

unfolding internally but with the broader influences of the Royal Commission into Child Sexual Abuse and the global Me Too movement – which not only shines a media spotlight on dark places but transforms what has been the silencing of individual women having to make individual complaints to a collectivity of women who are speaking out.