

Thank you again for providing APC students the opportunity to attend the IWD Breakfast - we had really interesting conversations regarding gender equality in the workplace after the event!

Our Vice Captain, [REDACTED], wrote the below reflection on behalf of the students who attended.

On Wednesday 7th March, a group six of APC's student leaders, with Ms Kubiak and Ms Jessop, attended a breakfast at the Crown Palladium for International Women's Day. The event was organised by Women in Rotary, and we were treated to a discussion by a panel of five speakers, moderated by journalist and broadcaster Ali Moore.

The discussion centred around women in the workplace, but also covered the treatment of women in broader society. Deborah Glass OBE, Victoria's first female ombudsman, spoke of her office, where 70% of her employees are female. This balance is tipped due to her offer of flexible hours, which resulted in far more applications from women, who have told her that they were attracted due to the jobs' possibilities for them to balance their work and home lives. Glass expressed her belief that Australia lags far behind the UK in its attitudes towards sexism and racism, pointing out that unacceptable language in the UK is commonplace in Australian society.

Andy Penn, the CEO of Telstra, spoke of his company's gender balance, which is close to equal overall, but has only 22% of senior positions currently held by women. He spoke of Telstra's ongoing aim of achieving gender equal employment, and the resistance encountered to this. Penn was more optimistic about Australian attitudes towards sexism, arguing that Australians are more comfortable than most to talk openly about sensitive issues, and this opens doorways to progress.

Husna Pasha, a businesswoman and media personality, spoke of understanding, not just between sexes, but between all groups. She believes that learning to laugh and be respectful at the same time is the most important thing for driving progress and starting conversations.

Adam Fennessy, an ex-governmental partner at Ernst & Young, talked about recruiting and hiring. He demonstrated that jobs do not always require experience and qualifications in a specific area, but recruiting can be broadened so that new perspectives and different ideas are brought to different jobs. This will also help women in the workforce, as areas that are typically male-dominated are opened up to a broader range of applicants.

Emma Welsh, the co-founder of Emma & Tom's food company, also spoke about offering flexible working hours, and this attracting more female applicants. Welsh also spoke about the traditional roles and stereotypes of men and women. She explained that women are less likely to attempt to take on jobs they feel they are not fully qualified for, and that they are also less likely to ask for pay increases, and this is one of the causes of the pay gap between male and female workers. She also explained that there is still an expectation that women perform traditional domestic duties, creating a further challenge for promotion in the workplace.

The discussion was brought to a close by a disturbing anecdote from Glass, in which she recounted a story from when she became the first female ombudsman of Victoria. She was informed of her salary, and she asked if that was what her male predecessor had been paid, to which no reply was given, until the next day she was informed that her salary had increased by \$40,000. The breakfast was a very memorable event, and all came away from it with fresh ideas about gender equality in all aspects of society.

I would like to thank, on behalf of APC, Women in Rotary for putting on the breakfast, and all those who spoke, for their wisdom and insights, and for making us more aware of the stereotypes, traditions and practices we all must challenge and overcome on the way to gender equality.

Kind regards,

Julia Kubiak
Student Leadership Coordinator