



BPW Darwin

Australian Federation of Business and Professional Women Inc

Darwin Centre

25 June 1998

Mrs Josephine Stone
8 Zealandia Crescent
Larrakeyah NT 0820

Dear Josephine

The Business and Professional Women's (BPW) Club of Darwin, would like to invite you to be our guest speaker at the Dinner Meeting on Wednesday 29 July at 7:00pm for 7:30pm.

Approximately, 20 -25 women will attend the meeting, so we've left the subject matter of your speech up to you. For your information, BPW Darwin's AGM will be held before the Dinner meeting.

As mentioned, BPW Darwin is hosting the BPW National Conference at the Rydges Plaza Darwin from 11 - 14 September.

If you have any questions, please call me during work hours on 8981 4404. We look forward to your acceptance.

Kind regards

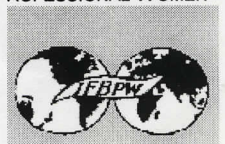
Carlyn Waters

Carlyn Waters

Do Women still Need a BPW?

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AFFILIATED WITH INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL WOMEN



DO WOMEN STILL NEED A BPW?

After nearly 100 years of modern day Feminism, if one begins count from the early suffragette period, what is the position of Australian Women in the 1990's?

In the home, women still retain responsibility for household chores with 80% of women taking the lion's share when not in the paid work force. Where both partners are working full time, 56% of women do the housework.

Whilst a number of women are choosing a single status in preference to marriage or not to have children, having babies remains popular with a 4 % increase in numbers between 1986 and 1996.

Marriage remains popular despite a 37% divorce rate for first time marriages (60% for second time marriages). This does not take into account the different types of marital partnerships or multi faceted family groupings which have become acceptable since the 1980's.

In terms of education, more women than men go onto higher

education. Of the total enrolments at the Northern Territory University in 1997, 60.9% were women. This reflects the continuing higher retention rates in secondary schooling for girls than boys.

Womens enrolments at the Northern Territory University remain heavily concentrated in the fields of foundation studies, arts, education and business.

This remains true for enrolments at TAFE.

Men predominate in the technology field, although I note with interest it is approximately 50/50 in legal studies.

In Business Administration and Economics, the enrolment for women in TAFE is 66% and for university it is 54%. I would like you to remember that particular statistic because I'm going to come back to it.

Both in the Territory and nationally women continue to earn less than men, despite the fact that they appear to be better

educated.

In 1997 Territory women earned an average of \$651.10 per week, representing 80% of the average weekly earnings of Territory men.

The participation rate of women in employment in the Territory as at January 1998 was 61.9%, the national average being 52.5%.

Yet it is interesting to note that the Territory rate for births is still the highest in Australia. This may be due to the fact that the median age of Territory women is 26, the national average being 34 years.

Of the 61.9% of women employed, 35% work part time and 65% work full time.

There is an increasing recognition of women as consumers.

Australian women control an annual expenditure of 90.2 billion

dollars in household outlays alone.

Some organisations have recognised this buying power by making their facilities more user friendly eg. longer opening hours to accommodate the working woman.

It is interesting to note that the 1993 Federal election campaign saw childcare addressed as an economic issue for the first time.

That's all very well you say but what does it mean?

It means this.

The average woman of today is a well educated working mother.

She may be better educated than her spouse but likely she will not earn as much.

She may be in middle management but finds that the last leap

through the glass ceiling into the director's chair still eludes her, unless she sets up her own business.

Whatever her working situation she still retains responsibility for household chores and the children.

She has increased financial clout and she is more confident and assured in using it.

However, she works longer hours. The average weekly hours worked by women has jumped 1 hour to 39.7 hours since 1990.

Despite the march of women into more senior positions in the work force, they fill only one quarter of all management and administration jobs.

Today's woman is unlikely to be in the best of health. 6 out of 10 women said in the last census that they do no physical activity or had low levels of exercise.

Add to this the increased demands of juggling work, family and

fiscal responsibility. Today's woman is very tired. In fact her biggest hurdle for the next millennium will probably be battling fatigue.

The proportion of public sector employees who are women is approximately 59%. At the middle management level, 64% are women. Yet the top management positions still remain elusive.

I do not have any figures for women in the private sector but I do have a particular example.

The three largest accountancy firms in Australia have recently appointed their new crop of partners.

Ernst & Young appointed 13 new partners. All were men.

Price Waterhouse Coopers appointed 35 new partners. 4 were women.

Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu appointed 25 new partners. 2 were women.

David Uren when commenting on this phenomena in his recent column in the Weekend Australian (July 11th & 12th 1998 page 53) sought to find reasons why this might be so. His conclusion was that gender bias is alive and well in the 1990's.

The 30's something age group from which new partners in professional organisations are chosen grew up accepting that women worked in paid employment and were the intellectual equal of men. They were raised in households where their mothers were either highly educated or in paid employment.

And yet women are still denied promotion to the very top position. There appears to be a greater acceptance of women at the middle management level.

Recent US research asked CEOs and other senior women executives what stopped women from assuming positions of corporate leadership.

The male CEOs stressed the lack of women executives in the pipeline with sufficient management experience. The women

emphasised the male stereotyping, exclusion from informal networks and the inhospitable corporate culture.

Let's look at that often vocalised criticism that women "just aren't there" to appoint.

Remember that earlier statistic that 66% of enrolments in courses such as Business, Administration and Economics were women?

During the period 1986 to 1996, the number of accountants increased to 106,000 of which 36,000 thousand were women.

According to David Uren there are 2 main arguments why women aren't getting the partnerships and directorships.

The first is that women don't want them. They prefer to seek a reasonable balance between work and family which means employment that does not demand the 12 hour days that no amount of childcare can accommodate. This apparently means that women are less ambitious in career terms than men.

I disagree. It means that men are still refusing to accept any, or any reasonable level of responsibility for their offsprings' daily care requirements and so it falls, out of necessity, for women to do so.

The second argument is that women are intentionally excluded. Why?

At junior levels of an organisation, technical competence is highly valued. As one ascends the corporate ladder technical competence is assumed. What becomes essential is the capacity to relate as a peer to senior executives or to senior customers.

This is when the informal social networks become significant.

Who plays golf together and shares the legendary stories about wild times on assignment interstate?

Who lunches together, goes to the footy or the cricket together?

Who is a member of that exclusive male only club?

It is that informal network that gets the male employee the partnership whilst the female employee merely scores the associateship.

For millennia men have gone off in groups to hunt or fish, leaving the women behind to gather berries and look after their young.

Whilst saber tooth tigers and dinosaurs and other ferocious beasts roamed the earth, there may have been a sound logic to this ie. using the brute strength of men to bring home the bacon whilst the weaker sex, being women, and children stayed behind.

Well, I haven't noticed too many saber tooth tigers still roaming around such as to keep me confined to the relative safety of my dwelling, although I have noticed that a few troglodytes still exist.

What started off as a practical biological necessity for survival has developed into artificial and obsolete methods of power and

gender control, keeping women available but in subordinate positions.

There are still many critics of functions, events or organisations which encourage and promote women. These critics say that men have never had the^{se} advantages or the encouragement.

What POPPY COCK.

Men have never needed the encouragement. They have ALWAYS had the advantages so long denied to women until recently of education, money, public recognition, the mere fact that they do not carry and give birth to their offspring.

When was the last time your male counterpart took the day off to look after a sick child?

Who plans and organises the childcare in your household?

Who does the daily pick up and drop off to school, football, tennis, ballet, the Doctor etc.?

I bet it's not him.

When your company organises that peculiar management training tool of taking you off to the back blocks, dressing you in fatigues and asks you to run around shooting your male counterparts with blue paint so that you can demonstrate team skills and leadership, do they also alternate with a program of yoga, meditation, stress management and human resource development? Instead of asking you to a lunch time strip joint or a football match, do they suggest a shopping expedition to the nearest designer boutique?

I don't think so.

What men want is to keep the toys amongst the boys.

They tell us we can have these toys if we play by their rules. These games are often played on shifting sands for a number of

reasons.

One is that men and women speak a different language.

For example.

Men are strong, women are tough.

Men are achievement orientated, women are unscrupulously ambitious.

Men show initiative, women are impractical.

Men are straight talkers, women are blunt or abrasive.

Then there are the hidden signals, the informal networks referred to earlier.

I read a recent article written by a man about businessmen who frequent lunch time strip joints. Apparently, the secret sexual thrill that men experience whilst watching a female stripper is an unspoken male bonding which, whilst never discussed, unites them in a shared experience such that it somehow enhances the business relationship.

There is no such thing as a level playing field. It is harder for women to achieve at the same rate and to the same extent as men, be it in business, politics, sport, you name it.

Do women still need a BPW? Absolutely. The more networks, structured or otherwise, that women can utilise the better chance we have of attaining political, professional, social and fiscal equality.

When we women are comfortable with ourselves, with using our economic and other powers, then maybe just maybe our male counterparts will also be comfortable with it.

We must not cringe when criticised for being ambitious or assertive. We must not be reluctant to identify and use the tools of power.

For far too long we have let our male counterparts call the tune. Why are we so reluctant to insist that the game gets played by our rules.

Organisations like BPW are so important in ensuring that women get as much of the cake as do our male colleagues.

After all, we've probably put all the ingredients of that cake together and baked it!

Thank you for your time.

Acknowledgements

Women in the budget 1998 to 1999

Australian Bureau of Statistics - Characteristics of Small Business 1997

NT Government Discussion Paper No. 11 October 1996 - Women as Customers

David Uren "Accountancy Practice Shows Women's Work is Never Done", the Weekend Australian July 11-12 1998 page 53