

FORUM

REPORT



TEAM UP & PROSPER

Rural Women in
Decision Making

Foreword



The NSW Government is working to provide greater opportunities for women to participate in decision making at all levels. Initiatives taken since the Government came to office have already seen a significant increase in the number of women directors of Rural Lands Protection Boards.

The Government remains committed to increasing the participation of women on the more than 1500 boards, committees and trusts covering all aspects of its own decision making processes.

In November 1997, NSW Agriculture's Rural Women's Network and Cobar Rural and Community Network organised a highly successful forum called Team Up and Prosper - Rural Women in Decision Making. The forum attracted more than 100 women of diverse backgrounds from throughout rural NSW.

Through forums such as Rural Women in Decision Making, rural women learn from the experiences of self-employed women in business, or in the boardrooms of business or other organisations. It is an opportunity for rural women to develop the skills and confidence to step forward in their own arenas.

Women can register their skills and experience on the NSW Government Register. The Government will use this Register when making appointments to boards or encouraging boards and committees to adopt strategies which will increase the participation of women, support women through training and mentoring, and monitor progress.

I commend this report of the first Women in Decision Making forum to you. It is both a record of the event and a resource for future use through continued networking and support. I would encourage all rural women to keep learning and to participate in decision making at each and every level. In this way, the whole community will benefit from your hard won expertise.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Amery'.

RICHARD AMERY MP
MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE
MINISTER FOR LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all those who have contributed their skills, time and support to the success of the 'Team Up & Prosper ~ Rural Women in Decision Making' Forum.

- ❖ The Forum Planning Team ~ ably chaired by Pat Le Lievre (Cobar Rural & Community Network), Susan Mitchell (NSW Farmers Association), Dr Margaret Alston (Charles Sturt University, Riverina), Nicki Nelson (Coopers Lybrand), Helen Ester (NSW Department for Women), Carolyn Page (Federal Department of Primary Industries & Energy, Rural Women's Unit) and NSW Agriculture's Rural Women's Network Staff ~ Margaret Carroll, Sonia Muir, Pam Cuelho and Allison Windus.
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- ❖ All the speakers, panellists, workshop facilitators and the marvellous support from their various workplaces; the workshop hostesses and poet Corrine Staas.
- ❖ Aspiring journalists, Orange High School students, Danica Bunch (reported to the Central Western Daily) and Luke Wong (forum photographer).
- ❖ The staff from the forum venue, Orange Ex-Services Club who were more than helpful in meeting all requests including use of local produce and gifts of local condiments.
- ❖ The many media outlets which 'spread the word' to a wider audience.
- ❖ Norma Ingram, Manager Corporate Planning, NSW Aboriginal Lands Council, for promoting the Forum to Aboriginal Women.
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Introduction

Team Up & Prosper ~ Rural* Women in Decision Making Forum

Across Australia, rural women have identified major concerns about their participation in decision making. The idea of a forum concentrating on rural women in decision making was a natural progression in the work of NSW Agriculture's Rural Women's Network (RWN) responding to rural women's concerns.

It builds on the success of the joint RWN/Central West Council of Adult and Community Education Stepping Stones leadership training program and requests from many women for its self help kit. At a national level, the forum builds on the opportunities opened up by the first joint State and Federal forum on Women in Agriculture and Resource Management where men and women worked together for NSW and National Action Plans for women in the sector.

The aim of the forum was 'to provide a dynamic learning and networking opportunity for women to increase their voice and participation in decision making' - to be a catalyst for women to take follow up action themselves back at home and in their businesses and industries.

The small team planning the forum was strategically drawn from organisations and agencies with influence in government, industry and community decision making. Members designed the forum to be for everyone ~ women of all ages and backgrounds who wanted a voice in the decisions about their own lives and communities.

The underlying philosophy throughout was that women and men need to walk forward together for really effective decision making, hence the forum title ~ 'Team Up and Prosper'. As Diba Samimi, an Iranian refugee told women at the forum "picture a bird with one wing as the man, the other as the woman. The bird cannot fly high unless both wings are working equally".



**The word 'rural' refers to anyone who lives outside metropolitan Sydney, Newcastle, Wollongong and those who think of themselves as rural.*

Snap Shots



~ From the Forum Facilitator, Cathy McGowan

Barbara Scott, 1996 Australian ABC Rural Woman of the Year

"We've become a society struggling with every day life, pushed to be successful, pushed to have more, be better, be the best..... Why? Is this success?" The first keynote speaker, Barbara Scott (1996 Australian ABC Rural Woman of the Year) set the tone for the forum by challenging us to question the way things are.

The Hon Faye Lo Po', then Minister for Women, & Minister for Fair Trading

Said that decision making structures do not reflect the fact that women are 51% of the population and that it is 'just sheer madness' not to make full use of women's skills and 'value the diversity of country people in NSW'.

Michelle Nugan, Managing Director, Nugan Group

Stressed the importance of asking the hard question, "Is it commercially viable?" And if not to change. To help us do this, it is sometimes necessary and helpful to pay for knowledge and experience. It can save us money in the long term. She also stressed the importance of family businesses.

Helen Lynch AM, Company Director

Told us how perceptions are changing, particularly of women's roles. She related the story of the young man in the lift who thought because of her clothes, that she may be a lawyer, then a barrister and best of all, a judge! She stressed the importance of common sense, of being the person to ask the first question, and how the secretary who writes the minutes and drafts the letters is also in a position of influence.

The Stepping Stones Panel

A selection of wonderful and inspiring stories, told with humor, emotion, common sense and great generosity. They covered much territory, with a key theme of commitment to learning - ongoing learning.

Fran Rowe, Chair, NSW Rural Assistance Authority & Rural Financial Counsellor, Tottenham

"Sitting on her cleavage" and defining the difference between concern and commitment by telling the story of the chook which lays eggs for breakfast - has involvement, but the pig which provides the bacon has commitment!"

Lyn Riley Mundine, Aboriginal Development Manager, Western Institute of TAFE, Dubbo

Has found a place for herself in education where she can be true to herself, her family, her employers and her culture and people. She has

faced lots of challenges and has an ongoing commitment to life long learning.

Anne Rogers, Chief Executive Officer, Memorial Services & Bowling Club, Cobar

Has lived a full and rich life with her fair share of tragedy. She has found that the words: “We have always done it like this!” are some of the most expensive in the English language - and later in the day another group of expensive words were offered to us: “We tried this before, but it didn’t work!” - expensive words because it stops good ideas being implemented.

Diba Samimi, Iranian woman of the Bahai faith

Gave us some lovely images of gardens - blooming like the diversity of women, and of the need for the bird of humanity to fly in balance with both wings (men and women) working in harmony.

Lucy Broad, National Manager, ABC Rural Radio, Sydney

Introduced to us the 7 P’s “Prior preparation and planning, prevents piss poor performance. ‘And the 8th ‘p’ - perhaps”... stressing the importance of being prepared.

Marg Bollinger, Founding Chair, Highway Safety Action Group, Molong

Shared her story of lobbying and the ease with which we can dig deep holes for ourselves and only have short ladders. She is convinced of the importance of change being able to happen when people are in the right place at the right time and want to be involved - that’s why “it is essential to buy the lottery ticket if you want to win the lottery.”

Jane Slack Smith, Explosives engineer

Our explosives engineer gave us the wonderful images of granite boulders which can be either obstacles or stepping stones depending on our perspectives.

Lindy Hyam, Executive Director, Horticultural Research & Development Corporation, Sydney

Lindy stressed the importance of building relationships. She told a story of a foreman in local government and a meeting in a room full of ‘girlie’ pictures. Her strength and success lay in her commitment to the relationship rather than reacting emotionally and perhaps inappropriately to the images. Her ability to ‘not respond or over-react’ resulted in a win for both her and the foreman. The pictures came down - without even asking!

Ros Lambert, Managing Director, Collaborative Business

Ros Lambert began the day with her very amusing presentation on

Participants’ comments from evaluation sheets

The Forum Overall...

“Certainly above my expectations in every area. Organisation was excellent and very professional but never losing that personal and caring quality.”

“So many talented women who come from simple backgrounds - that they didn’t start off in life with such goals - life situations forced them to take action.”

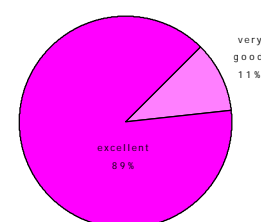
“The unity and desire to see women and men work together.”

“Superb - utterly professional”

“Fantastic! I loved it all. Congratulations”

“It has made goal setting easier and clearer.”

Organisation & management of the forum



*"...bloom where
you are planted."*

~ Cathy McGowan



setting a direction for our lives. Some of her suggestions were to take time out - for a long bath and an occasional sleep-in. The need to ask questions – “What if...?” and to set a direction which acknowledges our passions – “Do you love what you are doing?”, and to know that we are the only ones who can change us by beginning with small steps. And there are two known ways of being rich - one is to have more, the other is to want less.

The Grasping the Nettle Panel

The Grasping the Nettle panel was a most innovative and amusing way to gain and share information about organisations, affirmative action and equal opportunity and case studies where industry is actively working to encourage a ‘diversity’ of staff and decision makers.

Bloom Where you are Planted

Highlights were Helen Lynch’s presentation, the workshops, the time for networking and meeting other participants and the Stepping Stones panel, the ‘ordinary-ness’ of the panellists and their ‘wonderfulness’.

There have been a number of themes running through the forum. Beginning with small steps, doing what you can do - and doing it well, taking opportunities for learning and being generous with your time and skills.

The image which is strongest in my mind is that of the garden and how wonderful a garden is in full bloom. May I encourage you to “bloom where you are planted. In this garden of rural NSW we have great diversity. We are all unique, different, and depending on our soil and environment we will grow and flower with different colours, perfumes and sizes. Conferences such as this provide the water, nurturing, sunlight and energy which we need to grow and bloom”. Sure some of us may be bulbs who flower in great colour, but only once a season. Others will be known for our persistence and ability to flower for long periods even during droughts.

In this garden we have some grand and well established old gum trees with roots deep into the water table. They can provide shelter and protection to many understory plants. There are some wattles flowering gloriously, briefly. While wattles are essential in capturing nitrogen and bonding it to the soil, they also have a short life span. At this forum there are many examples of companion planting as well as native wilgas and orchids, imported herb bushes, some roses, even a cactus or two.

“In this garden there is a place for all of us. And all of us can provide fertiliser and sunlight to each other - offering support and friendship.”

~ From the Evaluations

What participants hoped to gain from the forum:

- ❖ Confidence, inspiration and motivation
- ❖ Networking and contacts
- ❖ Understanding of women's issues
- ❖ Knowledge, how others do it (involvement in decision making)
- ❖ New ideas, resources
- ❖ To hear stories
- ❖ Skills ~ business, managing family, decision making, media, public speaking, organising conferences, working the system, how to work with men.

What participants want to put into practice:

- ❖ "Positive attitudes."
- ❖ "Writing down my goals and getting in and doing stuff."
- ❖ "Encouragement and support of women - keep in touch."
- ❖ "How to begin an indigenous women's movement across NSW that must also involve non-indigenous women as we discuss and rectify the issues that divide us."
- ❖ "That I can change my life if I choose to. There is help out there for isolated women like myself."

Follow up from the forum:

The forum has acted as a catalyst for further workshops as other initiatives. The Australian Institute of Company Directors has offered to organise a workshop in 1998 in a rural location, at the instigation of a participant. The Rural Women's Network is investigating the potential of mentoring using technology and many participants are inspired to pursue goal setting, networking and mentoring.

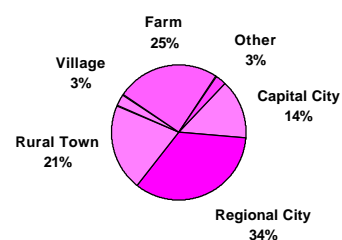
The Australian Institute of Company Directors

For information on a proposed rural workshop
contact Fran Morris ☎ (02) 9299 8788

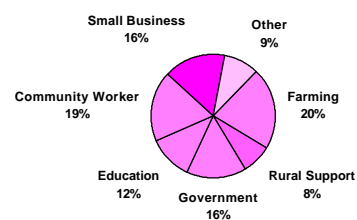
Participants' Profile

The forum attracted a range of 120 participants with the following profiles:

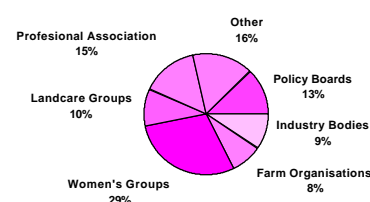
Where do you live?



What is your occupation?



Are you involved in any of the following Organisations?



Speeches



The Hon Faye Lo Po', then Minister for Women & Minister for Fair Trading

Thanks to Mayor Mr Richard Niven for the warm welcome.

I congratulate the Rural Women's Network and the Cobar Community and Rural Network for initiating the first forum in NSW to address the issues of rural women in decision making.

Since its foundation in 1992 the Rural Women's Network, through its State Advisory Committee and community based networks, has been instrumental in raising the profile of rural women in NSW.

In the short space of five years their achievements include:

- founding *The Country Web* newsletter which reaches over 18,000 women;
- developing extensive communication networks amongst rural women, and between women, government agencies and non-government organisations;
- achieving recognition of priority issues for women in country NSW;
- organising and publicising educational programs, and information days; and
- coordinating leadership programs - such as the very successful project *Stepping Stones*, which like this two day forum, I am proud to say, was supported by funds from the *NSW Women's Grants Program*.

Over the next two days a range of activities will be rolled into one unique exercise to expose the nuts and bolts of how to get into decision making structures.

The Forum planning group have carefully avoided the 'talk-fest' nature of many conferences, in favor of 'Action Workshops'. These workshops will give us all the opportunity to polish those skills that will help us have our say, and be heard, in all areas of life.

Women with first hand experience of the long haul into the halls, boardrooms and organisations of the decision makers, will share their stories, answer questions and offer advice.

As Minister for Women, I have had the opportunity to participate in events and consultations which show that women in rural NSW are on the move, impatient to play their part in the challenge to refashion local and regional economies.

Last night many of you heard former ABC Australian Rural Women of the Year, Barbara Scott speak and would be aware of how her wool business helped transform opportunities for the community in the Coonabarabran area.

So it's a good time to be Minister for Women and to be in a position to encourage and support rural women as you strengthen networks, support each other, exchange information and ideas, and share inspiration.

Of course women in country NSW have always done this. In the past, when there were obstacles - rural women formed their own alternative organisations such as Women's Rural Action Committee, Women in Dairying, the Farm Women's Network, the Country Women's Association and many more.

What's different today is that rural women are saying, that as well as going around barriers, they also want to climb them - to be there in direct and open partnership with the decision makers.

We've just seen the effects of this momentum in the remarkable results achieved by the Rural Lands Protection Boards' Association project, funded by the 1996 NSW Women's Grants Program. The project's aim was to encourage more women to nominate for this year's elections for the Rural Lands Protection Boards (RLPB).

The tireless work of project coordinator, Kathy Sielicki has acted as a lightening rod for other women, and the 1997 election result has been a great boost for rural women.

The outcome of the elections has seen

- the number of women Directors rising from 18 to 34, a percentage increase from 4% to 9% which means that the overall representation of women on the RLPB's rose by 125%;
- the number of Boards with women Directors increasing by 10, from 17 to 27; and
- the overall percentage of Boards with women nearly doubling from 29% to 56%.

Women are on the move - and that's as it should be. At 51% of the population we're a majority, and that's why the NSW Government regards greater participation of women in decision making structures as a matter of social justice - a fair go. Apart from the fact that it is just sheer madness to throw away the skills and talents of women like yourselves!

On coming to power in 1995 the NSW government committed itself to *'properly utilise the pool of well qualified women in the community... and where possible to ensure that at least 50% of new appointments*

"...it's a good time to be Minister for Women and to be in a position to encourage and support rural women..."

"Women are on the move - and that's as it should be."

~ Minister Lo Po'

"We are encouraging women to put themselves forward to serve on Government Boards and Committees ..."

"...women made up 35% of new appointments to Boards in 1996/97. A total of 431 women were recruited."

~ Minister Lo Po'

Women's Register & Non-English Speaking Background Register

Further information and forms are available from:

**NSW Premier's Department
Level 32, Governor Macquarie Tower
1 Farrer Place
SYDNEY NSW 2000**

**☎ (02) 9228 4677 OR
☎ (02) 9228 5292**

to government boards, councils and committees are women.'

As a Government we have taken that commitment seriously. We are encouraging all women to put themselves forward to serve on Government Boards and Committees – especially women from non-English speaking backgrounds, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

We have established the Women's Register, and Registers for non English speaking background people and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Through these Registers women can identify their interest in being appointed to Government Boards and Committees, list their skills and competencies, and put themselves in the frame.

Government Agencies have been directed by the Premier to consult the Register when considering new appointments. This offers the chance to broaden the pool of possible recruits beyond the 'usual suspects' and get a richer and more diverse set of talent to choose from.

Forms for the Registers are available from the NSW Premier's Department. I urge you to fill them in and get yourselves on the Register.

But we know that it is not enough. Putting yourself up only to face the same old forms of resistance, the same old boys network, would just be 'dispiriting' – so we have recognised that the recruitment, selection and operation of those Boards and Committees have to change too.

The Premier is a strong supporter of this initiative. He has directed all Ministers to examine current membership on such boards. Where there is poor representation of women, non English speaking background people, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, he wants to know why, and what is going to be done about it.

Each agency is putting in place strategies to tackle the problem of under representation. These include broadening the usual channels of recruitment – from *'just the mate you know'* to wider advertising and more transparent processes. We have taken some good steps forward – women made up 35% of new appointments to Boards in 1996/97. A total of 431 women were recruited.

Unfortunately these actions do not add up to instant success. The percentage of women on boards and committees stands at 26%. So we still have a fair way to go. You cannot undo years of history and privilege so easily.

I am currently struggling with the constraint of having nominations tied to particular organisations who consistently put up men. Always with

the same old cry ... *we couldn't find any women with the skills* ... I think these men must lead very narrow lives. I have a few tricks up my sleeve to try on this one - I will keep you posted.

But, good news - there are some great opportunities coming up in the near future which I urge you to take. In 1998 there will be vacancies on 17 Area Health Boards across NSW. These offer women the chance to play an important role in setting directions for the public health system in NSW.

Area Health Services have responsibility for the provision of NSW public health services including hospitals and community health. These services are dear to women's hearts - given we still carry the major responsibility for health of families and ourselves. Women's perspective on health issues are vital and will help the Government ensure that the health system reflects the community it serves. Vacancies will be advertised in the first half of 1998 in the Sydney metropolitan and regional press. So get those applications in!

Members are also being sought now for the regional Catchment Management Committees, in the Department of Land and Water Conservation. These committees play a key role in coordinating community and government efforts to improve the catchment areas around rivers. These are issues on which rural women doubtless have much to contribute.

I recently advertised for new members to the Premier's Council for Women - and of course consulted the register. I am delighted to say that I received 85 excellent applications. It really demonstrates that the talent is out there. My Council has always had and will continue to have a good representation of rural women and is a great example of harnessing a diverse group of women's skills to promote change. The Council is held in high regard by the Premier and acts as an important catalyst in getting women's issues on the agenda of government, and in the public arena.

We have a major *NSW Action Plan for Women* in place to ensure government departments and agencies understand the importance of making women's issues central to their day to day activities.

The Premier's Council for Women held consultations here in Orange in June receiving vital, first hand information about the issues which most acutely affect rural women.

We also receive loud and clear messages from the community each year when we call for applications for funds for the NSW Government's \$1 million *Women's Grants Program*. Amongst the hundreds of exciting and challenging proposals from community groups are a very large

"...partnership and cooperation is the way to grow – and to go forward, together."

~ Minister Lo Po'

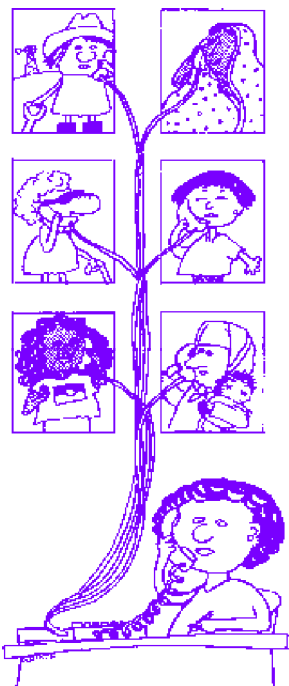
Premier's Council for Women

c/- NSW Department for Women



☎ 1800 817 227

**Women's Information &
Referral Service
(WIRS)**



Freecall 1800 817 227
TTY 1800 673 304
Fax (02) 9334 1023

**NSW Working
Women's Centre**

Suite 1-4, 1 Barrack
Lane, PARRAMATTA
NSW 2150

☎ (02) 9689 2233

**Immigrant Women's
Speakout Association
of NSW**

PO Box 31, HARRIS
PARK NSW 2150

☎ (02) 9635 8022

number from rurally based organisations.

The significant number of successful grants going to rural and regional NSW reflects the strength and diversity of women's organisations in those areas. For example, two of the projects this year are funded to facilitate women's economic roles in regional areas.

One project will hold a series of seminars for small business women in the Northern Rivers Region. The other will assist women's participation in the economic restructure in the Newcastle region.

Overall, the 1997 round of the *Women's Grants Program* allocated:

- \$738,000 to seven large projects - three of which are for projects in country NSW, in Lismore, Coonamble and Walgett; and
- \$201,091 to 12 small projects, 9 of which are for projects based in rural or regional Australia.

This \$1 million NSW government initiative should set a national standard, but just as the Federal Government has cut back on many vital services to women, it has also reduced its women's grants to a quarter of a million dollars, for the whole of Australia.

Whether it's through the Grants Program, or direct consultations, we have found that a constant priority for rural women is the need to have access to information. We have taken this on board.

The Department for Women provides a Women's Information and Referral Service (WIRS) which can be accessed by a free 1800 call from anywhere in NSW. The Department also has a fax to fax information service.

Yesterday afternoon WIRS together with the NSW Working Women's Centre, and the Immigrant Women's Speakout Association held a free information session for community organisations in Orange.

Finally I think it's important to remember and value the diversity of country people in NSW as reflected in the audience today. As we all know – partnership and cooperation is the way to grow – and to go forward, together. On behalf of everyone here today I thank the Planning Committee for their hard work in organising the next two days. And it is with great pleasure I declare open the first NSW forum to address the issue of rural women in decision making. I am sure the next two days will live up to the name *Team up & Prosper*.

Barbara Scott ~ Guest Speaker

The 1996 ABC Rural Woman of the Year, Barbara Scott, farmer and wool garment manufacturer, also has extensive experience in adult education including leadership skills, team building, negotiation skills and decision making.

After wool prices crashed, Barbara decided to investigate the possibility of selling manufactured wool products. After a year of analysis, Barbara and her family moved to Coonabarabran to establish the Wool 'n' Yarn Co. Initially selling a range of doonas, the business soon expanded to include socks, underwear, casual clothing, jumpers, coats and ties. The operation is now so successful, it has expanded to overseas markets.

Barbara is keen to employ local workers, and has established an Industrial Sewing Techniques course with the Coonabarabran TAFE School of Fashion. She is committed to Australian wool, her town and the future of the wool industry.

As I look back on my life I wonder what it's all about, what does it all mean. As a kid I spent many hours sitting around the kitchen table, learning skills from my parents and siblings. Life was difficult, but simple. Yet we enjoyed it. We had a 'quality of life'.

I wonder what's happened to today's people – we've become a society struggling with everyday life, pushed to be successful, pushed to have more, be better, be the best. We can all identify with the struggle, the pain, the frustration – overworked, striving for better. Compete, beat, win. Why? Is this success?

"Man spends all his life trying to climb the ladder. Only to find it's leaning on the wrong wall – the wall called success."

A visitor walked in from Queensland, looked around the Wool 'n' Yarn Company and talked about success. His parting advice was DECIDE what is enough in your life, then you'll be happy. If we continually struggle for more, better, best - when do we reap the harvest we have sown? When are we satisfied?

As a child every Christmas Eve, my father took me to the Christmas street parade. It was my birthday. The streets were constantly flowing with crowds of people. I couldn't see the parade. Dad lifted me up on his shoulders. I could see the lot. He taught me a valuable lesson in doing that because in the words of Einstein – "If I've seen further than other men, it's because I've stood on the shoulders of giants".

Ralph Waldo Emerson
said:

SUCCESS

To laugh often and much;
to win the respect
of intelligent people and
affection of children;
to earn the appreciation
of honest critics
and endure the betrayal
of false friends; to
appreciate beauty, to find
the best in others;
to leave the world a bit
better, whether by
a healthy child, a garden
patch or a redeemed
social condition; to know
even one life has
breathed easier because
you have lived. This
is to have succeeded.

"Man spends all his life trying to climb the ladder. Only to find it's leaning on the wrong wall – the wall called success."

"If we are to team up and prosper, we must have direction, purpose and contribute to the whole."

~ Barbara Scott



We hear so often about the self-made man or woman but where would we be if we forget the efforts of those who helped us along the way – the teachers, garbage collectors, members of the team. Remember whose shoulders you've sat on, how many times did you acknowledge their efforts, their contribution to you and the achievements in your life?

We all acknowledge the parents who reared us and the teachers who advocated for us. But do we remember the invisible giants who helped us? When we look back on our achievements we must acknowledge that we have done NOTHING ON OUR OWN. We are part of a larger whole, a network of people standing on each other's shoulders. We need to share the sunlight that holds strong.

If we are to team up and prosper, we must have direction, purpose and contribute to the whole. I know where I'm going and with whom - DO YOU?

Helen Lynch AM ~ Recognising and Celebrating Rural Women

Helen Lynch is a non-executive Director of Coles Myer Ltd, Southcorp Holdings Ltd and most recently Westpac Bank. She chairs the Superannuation Funds Management Corporation of South Australia and is a Director of Darling Harbour Authority, Norwich Union Financial Services Group and OPSM Protector Ltd.

Helen has had a distinguished career in the banking and finance industry, after starting work in a bank in outback Queensland at the age of 15. In 1978 she was the first woman manager to be appointed at the Bank of New South Wales (now Westpac). She then progressed to various senior executive positions. In 1993 she was appointed Chief General Manager Corporate Affairs and a member of Westpac's executive team.

In 1997 Helen was appointed by the Federal Government as a Delegate to the Constitutional Convention. She has always been committed to the community, serving on independent school boards and as a director of a number of arts and charitable organisations.

Recognising and Celebrating Rural Women

It's instructive to look at the titles of the presentations you are going to be listening to over these two days - I seem to be the only person with an upbeat title - 'Out of the Fat & Into the Fire' - 'I Don't Know if You Can Help Me' - 'Stepping Stones, Jumping Boulders' - 'How Can I Get Somewhere if I Don't Know Where I'm Going' and 'Grasping the Nettle.'

All those titles convey pain and struggle, and while much of our bush mythology focuses on the hardships and deprivations of country life, I

have to believe that there is much that is positive and life affirming about living in rural Australia - otherwise you wouldn't be here.

So whatever the reason for giving me the cheery title, I'm delighted to have the opportunity to stroll down memory lane with you this morning, and then I'd like to reflect on some of the key issues that unite Australian women, wherever they live, and explore areas where I believe rural women have a significant contribution to make.

I grew up in Charleville, and indeed my first job was with the local bank which eventually became Westpac. If there's a downside in growing up in a rural community, and then moving away, it's that it's pretty hard to share city folks romantic view of life in the country. While I remember my girlhood in Charleville with a great deal of affection, I'm also clear-eyed about what a difficult, tough existence many farm families faced.

If you've read Jill Ker Conway's wonderful book 'The Road to Coorain', you will recall her description of a housewife's life in rural Australia. On Monday, the laundry was done. White things were boiled in the copper and starched. Coloured things were scrubbed by hand and rinsed in blue. Care was taken in hanging them out to dry lest the sun bleached the coloured fabrics white.

On Tuesdays, the ironing was done. First everything had to be 'damped down' with water bottles with little holes in the top, and then rolled up to stop them drying out again, before they were ironed with flatirons heated on top of the kitchen stove. As the household grew, the whole of Wednesday was needed for sewing and mending.

Thursday was for baking scones, cupcakes, sponge and pound cakes for tea, tarts and flans for desserts, and meat pies to use up the leftovers. All were baked in the oven of the wood stove, with a quick test of the hand to determine whether the oven temperature was 'just right' to brown pastry or to make a sponge cake rise.

Friday was for house cleaning. Every room was swept and dusted thoroughly, every floor was washed, wax polish was applied to the linoleum floors, and then if you were very 'moden', you had a little upright Hoover polisher, with three revolving brushes - a hard set and a soft set to buff up the floor - failing that it was a hands and knees job.

There were lots of visitors - itinerant shopkeepers who sold everything from sewing machines to patent medicines. Did you have the Rawleigh man in NSW? He seems to have been a staple of country life in Queensland at least up until the late 50's, selling vile tasting patent medicines, and tonics, and mysterious ointments that smelled truly awful.

*"Monday, the laundry
was done...
Tuesdays, the ironing
was done...
Wednesday was
needed for sewing and
mending...
Thursday was for
baking...
Friday was for house
cleaning..."*

~ Helen Lynch

“...agripolitics is a tough business, and the number of women at senior levels is still too low.”

“Let’s put a match to the grass ceiling. It’s time for women to be represented in equal numbers at every level of decision making in rural communities.”

~ Helen Lynch

While it is possible to think fondly of the certainties of the rhythms of rural life back then, I doubt that any of us would seriously want to return to the backbreaking predictability of much of what constituted our mothers’ lives. It’s probably true that urban women were undertaking many of the same tasks, although probably for fewer people, and whether bushie or townie, it’s certainly true that the unpaid, voluntary work of women for their families and their communities has been a cornerstone of the Australia way of life.

Today many rural women are true partners in their families’ farms, and vital contributors to country communities. That change has been a little slower in the country than it has been in the city, because rural people value their traditions, and are reluctant to chase after every passing fad.

Australia owes much to rural women’s groups, such as the Country Women’s Association, who led the charge for better health and education, services for rural families, but it is only in comparatively recent times that self-fulfillment has been accepted as a legitimate goal for country women. Not all rural women are mothers. Not all women living in rural areas are farmers, but the old stereotypes are hard to shake.

It’s terrific to see the number of community groups and networks which have sprung up in recent years to support rural women and to represent their views to government. And I’m delighted that the Executive Director of the National Farmers Federation is a woman – but I’m sure I don’t have to tell you that agripolitics is a tough business, and the number of women at senior levels of the Organisation is still too low.

I have been the Presiding Member for several years now for the Department of Primary Industries, advising the Minister on appointments to major boards, such as the Australian Wheat Board, and it has been difficult to locate rural women with broad experience at the Regional, State and National levels. Typically, rural women’s experience is confined to local politics, while men’s experience is much broader.

I hope that some time over the next two days you’ll spend some time reflecting on why this is so, and what you might do to hasten the mainstreaming of women into agripolitics. Let’s put a match to the grass ceiling. It’s time for women to be represented in equal numbers at every level of decision making in rural communities.

As part of that preparation for leadership, I hope each of you have made a personal commitment to lifelong learning. The statistics indicate that rural women are better educated than rural men, but in today’s fast moving environment, you need to commit to at least one further education project each year.

Computers have revolutionised not just farm machinery, but managing the farm business – and computer skills continually need to be topped up. Courses in public speaking and how to conduct meetings are also useful for the chronically shy.

The range of TAFE courses available is now extensive, with many courses able to be done at home, and at times to suit the student. The benefit of TAFE courses is a two-way street. It benefits the student obviously, and by keeping class sizes up, it keeps TAFE colleges, and their attendant employment opportunities, in rural communities.

There are now a number of alternatives to TAFE, with private 'for profit' training providers, Adult & Community Education, and universities increasingly competing for customers, so there is a course that will be just right for you.

Keeping your skills level topped up is just as important as having regular health check-ups. It's all part of keeping body and soul in good working order. And it's never been more important to be on top of your farm. Australia is facing some big issues, and a positive contribution from rural women could really make a difference.

You know that I've been appointed to the Constitutional Convention next year, and I'm really looking forward to making a contribution to the debate. As a businesswoman, I have come to believe over time that Australia should become a republic. I believe that the role of Head of State has evolved from the largely ceremonial role of the past to a more contemporary approach. I believe that the role of our Head of State is to represent us – to be our advocate if you like – both to ourselves and in the global arena.

The Queen fulfils a very important role as an ambassador abroad for British industry and trade – a role she can not fill for us. The globalisation of trade means that we are commercially disadvantaged by this. Simply put, I want the Head of State to be an Australian.

Now you may well have a different view, and my purpose in raising the topic today is not to endeavour to convert you to the Republican cause, but rather to say to you that this is a critical issue for Australia. Whether you be Republican or Monarchist, it is vitally important that you take the time to get up to speed on the issues, make an informed choice, and exercise your democratic right at the ballot box. There is a real risk, I believe, that the poll will only attract voters at either end of the ideological spectrum, because voting is not compulsory. Our first exercise in non-compulsory voting is a great opportunity for us to demonstrate our commitment to the democratic process, and I urge you to make sure you turn out to vote.

"Keeping your skills level topped up is just as important as having regular health check-ups."

"I also believe that rural women have a positive contribution to make towards reconciliation with indigenous Australians."

~ Helen Lynch

Information Kits

*on the role of the
Constitutional
Convention are
available from:*

**YWCA
GPO Box 1022
DICKSON ACT 2602**

☎(02) 6230 5150

*"...I believe the politics
that divided rural
women from city
women are not helpful
to Australia."*

~ Helen Lynch

The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) has been funded by the Office of Status of Women (OSW) to produce an information kit for women on the role of the Constitutional Convention, and the ballot. It is available through their national office in Canberra.

I also believe that rural women have a positive contribution to make towards reconciliation with indigenous Australians. Much more than their city sisters, country women have shared their communities with Aboriginal Australians for generations. The closeness of that contact has sometimes been uncomfortable for both sides, and it is an issue that many people would still like to sweep under the carpet.

But the issue of Native Title is too important. A full debate is essential on such a key issue. I believe the extinguishment of Native Title is not an option for us. The courts will be clogged for years with compensation claims if we attempt to go down this route. Far better, I believe to continue to recognise that Native Title can co-exist with Pastoral Leases, and to sit down together and negotiate how we can share equitably access to the land we all love.

The Aboriginal Reconciliation Commission is an important initiative which has established a useful dialogue between black and white Australians at the grass roots level, and I believe ordinary Australians have a real opportunity to demonstrate leadership in this area. I also believe that rural women have an important opportunity to make their voices heard in the race debate now raging through Australia.

In times of high unemployment, and rapid social change, I guess we're all tempted to look for someone to blame, but Pauline Hanson's politics of racism and exclusion do not provide us with any useful answers.

The Asia-Pacific region, which is our geographical home, hosts cultures like ours – the US, Canada, New Zealand. The cultures of the Micronesian, Melanesian, and Polynesian peoples – to our north includes the largest Muslim nation in the world. China and Japan have distinct cultures to those of the smaller Asian states. Somehow, in the midst of all this, Australia has managed to create an identity for itself as a young, energetic nation, with a tolerant, inclusive society. We must not allow the politics of division and exclusion to establish themselves.

Our standing with our Asian neighbours has been immeasurably damaged by Pauline Hanson, and as South-East Asia is the major purchasers of our primary products, rural Australia has much to lose if the politics of One Nation are allowed to gain a foothold in the Australian politic body.

Now you might be wondering what the Republic, and Reconciliation, and Pauline Hanson have to do with celebrating rural women, but I

believe the politics that divided rural women from city women are not helpful to Australia. The three issues I've just described are the most important long term issues we face, and I would like to celebrate rural women by mainstreaming them into the big debates that face us as a nation.

Of course, rural women will always have special issues that affect their local communities, but as part of maturation of the political process in rural Australia, I think it's time the voice of rural women was heard on the national stage, raising their voices on the big issues. It's very easy to be marginalised by local politics, and the special issues of isolation that affect women in the bush, but you have a contribution to make to the broader national debates that affect us all.

I want to conclude my remarks today by talking about leadership. It's a hot topic these days, and the general consensus seems to be that there's not enough of it. We accuse politicians of a lack of leadership. We have lost faith in our major institutions. The banks, the media, the church. We don't trust anyone anymore. So we are simultaneously refusing to be led, and complaining about a dearth of leadership. To paraphrase Julius Caesar - "the fault, dear sisters, is not in the stars, but in ourselves."

Leadership is everyone's responsibility. It's not a commodity that we can order politicians to produce on demand. Leadership grows out of shared values, a commitment to community, and a respect for diversity and the belief of others. Leadership is simply the recognition that each of us has a responsibility to leave the world a better place than we found it. It's the same sort of values that we instill in our children. If you don't tidy your room, no-one else will do it for you, and if we don't tidy up our external environment ourselves, we'll all be living in a pig sty.

Rural women have always been very strong on shared values. They have believed passionately in the rural way of life as something worth preserving, and there is much you could teach the rest of Australia about that sense of shared community which has been such a defining feature of country life. But leadership can be tough for women in the country. Attitudes can be hard to shift, and sometimes, other women can be our toughest critics. So it's really important that we commit to supporting each other, as we develop our leadership skills.

If rural women would recognise and celebrate the leadership skills in themselves, and in all country women, you would be an unstoppable force for good, not only in your own community, but for Australia as a nation.

You have much to celebrate already. Women like Janet Holmes a Court, Barbara Scott, Fran Rowe, Cathy McGowan, and Lyn Riley Mundine are all rural women of high achievement and distinction.

"...it's time the voice of rural women was heard on the national stage, raising their voices on the big issues."

"Leadership. It's a hot topic these days, and the general consensus seems to be that there's not enough of it..."

To paraphrase Julius Caesar – "The fault, dear sisters, is not in the stars, but in ourselves."

"...each of us has a responsibility to leave the world a better place than we found it."

"You have a powerful voice. You just need to teach yourselves to sing."

~ Helen Lynch



"The business world is no place for the faint hearted and there is no prize for second best!"

~ Michelle Nugan

I hope when I come to speak to you again that every topic and every speaker is celebrating the leadership and the achievements of rural women. You have a powerful voice. You just need to teach yourselves to sing!

Michelle Nugan ~ "Out of the Fat and into the Fire!"

Unexpectedly propelled into the business world in 1986 by the death of her husband, successful Griffith businessman Ken Nugan, Michelle Nugan's life has changed dramatically in the last 10 years.

Marrying young, she moved to Griffith where her husband managed the Nugan family business. Devoting the next 24 years to raising three children, she was very active in organising fund-raising activities for the Children's Medical Research Institute. In 1973 she completed her Higher School Certificate and obtained a Bachelor of Arts as a part time student.

When her husband died after a short illness the following year, Michelle Nugan, with no business training or experience became Managing Director of the Nugan Group, a multi-million dollar fruit and vegetable packaging and processing company.


Since then, thanks largely to her natural business acumen, energy and determination, Nugan Group profitability has increased significantly and turnover has trebled, while the business has developed a substantial export division and has become vertically integrated through the development of horticultural interests.

Well respected in an almost exclusively male industry as a forthright and honest businesswoman with a good eye for a business opportunity, Michelle still maintains a close-knit family unit. Two of her children are currently involved in the business – son Mathew is Group General Manager and daughter Tiffany is Sales Executive for Nugan Quality Foods.

Extending the sense of family to associates and customers, visiting Japanese buyers are regularly entertained at home rather than in an impersonal restaurant environment. This personal touch is important, and has contributed to expanding the export of fresh and processed products from the two Griffith operations.

Out of the fat & into the fire!

The business world is no place for the faint hearted and there is no prize for second best. The main key to success is keeping tightly focused on your vision, objectives and strategies.



When I went for an interview as a finalist in the Telstra Business Women's Awards I made the fatal mistake of saying to the female judge when asked about my career that up until 12 years ago I was just a housewife and mother. Was I severely berated for my comments! "That is the most difficult and challenging career" she was quick to inform me. Well I can assure you that I have found her to be completely and utterly WRONG. Give me back my role as a housewife and mother any day!

Not that I am saying that running a house and family is easy but for me running a business and its extended family of 150, up to 500 at times is a lot more frustrating and nerve racking than organising and managing four or five in a family.

Being successful in either of these situations of course cuts a very fine line and one person's view of success can be viewed by another as failure.

It is very difficult to talk about personal success because I really don't think the success of my business can be attributed to me alone nor do I believe that one can afford the feeling of complacency over success as success is never constant.

Prior to taking over the family company I had no formal training in this field but my father was a reasonably prominent businessman. In those days children were seen and not heard. No TV so evenings would be spent listening to Dad's day to day activities and how he resolved his dilemmas. Therefore from a young age I was already gaining a peripheral understanding of some aspects of the commercial world be it that it may have been a biased view through my father's eyes.

Praise from parents was not forthcoming but expectations were high. So if you were smart you would achieve your parent's ideals without expectation of a reward couched in the form of praise.

I was married at 19, moved to Griffith and had two boys by the time I was 23. At the age of 28 I re-enrolled in correspondence school for Year 11 and 12 full matriculation. During this time our family expanded with the birth of a daughter two and a half months before my finals.

I went on to complete a Bachelor of Arts degree at Armidale University by correspondence. I enjoyed the challenge of studying and the self discipline that went with it. Unbeknown to me at the time this stood me in good stead for what lay ahead.

Some 12 years ago my husband was diagnosed with cancer and subsequently died two months later. Thus by default I inherited the business which I now run.

"...success just doesn't come by luck, it comes from hard work and a good team backing you up. "

"We developed into a kind of extended family and today I can confidently say that I feel very deeply about my staff and I believe they do for me."

"In business, flexibility and progress is the name of the game and one has to always be looking to the future as well as the present."

~ Michelle Nugan

The business was made up of four subsidiaries, two in NSW – Nugan Griffith packs fresh fruit and vegetables & Nugan Quality Foods manufactures fresh fruit and vegetable juice and puree products. Bairds Produce and Nugan Produce are located at the Brisbane Markets. Bairds Produce comprises seven market stands, which handle hard produce such as potatoes, onions and pumpkins. Nugan Produce pre-packs hard produce for supermarket trade.

At the time of my becoming Managing Director of Nugan Group it was a public company. I approached the minority shareholders to buy them out as I felt I was going to have my work cut out to make the operations work without having a 'Spanish Inquisition' over every decision that I made.

The minority shareholders were more than happy to accept my offer, as they would have had doubts about my ability to turn an ailing rural enterprise into a profit making concern. Might I add I was somewhat daunted by the challenge as well but had a hidden yearning to have a go at running the business of which I had been a silent observer for the past 24 years. During these 24 years I offered opinions most of which were ignored even though I felt some ideas had merit and deserved recognition.

Initially the only thing that stood me in good stead was my common sense. I had plenty of that. Certainly, if motivation and determination was all that was required to succeed I would have succeeded instantly.

But the reality of life is that success just doesn't come by luck, it comes from hard work and a good team backing you up. It involves guts, fortitude and many slaps in the face along the way. One cannot afford to be over sensitive because if you are, you'll never survive the challenge. Initially I was over sensitive but in time, I learnt that the only loser was myself, as the rest of the world continues.

Due to the tight financial position of the company, I and key personnel have had to be 'hands-on'. This helped a lot to build the morale of employees and camaraderie between management. Plus, might I say, it was great fun and a very good way of gaining a better understanding as to the mechanics of the day to day running of the business. We developed into a kind of extended family and today I can confidently say that I feel very deeply about my staff and I believe they do for me.

In business, flexibility and progress is the name of the game and one has to always be looking to the future as well as the present. Our juice plant was built to process off-run citrus from our fruit packing operation instead of dumping, as was the case previously. Today our processing base has expanded to include value added products such as carrot juice, puree, cloudy apple, vinegar and wine which return premium prices.

Presently, nutritionists tell us olive oil, two glasses of red wine and exercise is the secret to long life. With this social change our Company's horticultural interest has turned its focus from citrus to growing grapes and olives for processing at our juice plant. Who would have guessed twenty years ago that this was the direction in which our citrus juice plant was going to head?

I think everyone understands that a lot of effort, time and emotion goes into developing a new product and/or growing permanent plantings, but often over time, given there comes the day when you have to stand back and take a good hard look at what your doing and ask yourself is it commercially viable and if the answer is NO then steel yourself to change. Thus flexibility in a fast changing world is a necessity for success.

Now maybe you can see what I mean when I said that success has many aspects and that change is essential progress to maintain success. Success can do funny things to people so I've got to say this even at the risk of sounding 'bitchy'.

Have you noticed how some successful people all of a sudden develop changed personalities. Written all over them is "Am I good or am I good". Never forget your grass roots and remember that the next year or in the next decade you may be out of vogue. In other words even in success keep focusing on the business and not yourself.

Interestingly, it has only been in the last 18 months that I have taken on a more public profile and might I tell you, this was not of my own doing but it has had its rewards. Not for the reasons you may think but prior to this time, I was relatively isolated from the business world other than my own industry. I shied away from public occasions as basically, I felt reasonably unconfident.

Having been thrown out of my comfort zone I was initially extremely self-conscious. Did you see the movie 'City Slickers'? Well I felt a bit like that in reverse. Global markets instead of International markets; workshops, Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) workshops and forums replaced the term conventions, glass ceiling & sticky loops. Good Lord what did these 'buzz words' mean?

One day when I was relating this to a friend she took me aside and said "Look Michelle, these wonderful buzz words are just the way people try to impress in a situation where they feel a little bit out of their depth. They bamboozle everyone with 'fab' words".

From that time on I thought if you can't beat them join them! For those people who feel insecure in this regard, just be yourself.

"...flexibility in a fast changing world is a necessity for success".

~ Michelle Nugan

“...believe in yourself, put in the effort and time required to make proper and full investigation in all aspects of decision making then you cannot help but succeed.”

~ Michelle Nugan

Oh yes and how could I forget networking. It is a good way of getting free drinks and food. And on the odd occasions, even something has come out of it. If you have time for this socialising then great, but for most business people in my industry time is too precious.

It has been good for me to be put out of my comfort zone and has done a lot for my confidence. My philosophy is believe in yourself, put in the effort and time required to make proper and full investigation in all aspects of decision making then you cannot help but succeed. Mind you everyone makes mistakes but so long as you learn from your mistakes, then there is a gain. Don't be afraid to say “I was wrong”. In fact, to admit you are human and make mistakes has a positive effect on staff.

Another important aspect that I have learnt is praise. Because of my upbringing praise was not strong on the agenda. During a workshop I had for my staff of which I was part, it was pointed out to me that even though I was pleased with the performance of my staff I never said so. Good lesson. So now even if I'm not 100% pleased I always recognise effort and good intention.

In business you come across many different personalities and cultures. Have an open mind about personalities and cultures. Luckily I have always been fascinated by people. I used to embarrass my children when I was 'people watching'. “Stop staring Mum” I would hear. Funny I never thought I was. Anyhow the point I'm making - enjoy people for what they are and don't be too critical. Its amazing how it can help clinch the deal.

Being Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a family business which has other family members employed in it can be very emotionally difficult. Some of you may have experienced this. It is not easy to work with family members. In my case this was even more difficult because my two boys were already in the business and for 'Mum' to come in and tell them what to do was not what they had envisaged particularly as they had visions of running the business.

At work I treated them with no special privileges because I believed they had plenty to learn but naturally they thought at the grand age of 20 and 22 they knew it all. Also it is not good for other staff members to see your children getting preferential treatment.

Result:: We had some shocking arguments, but over time we grew to respect each other's business acumen and I am proud to say that now we carry out the very delicate balancing act of having Mum as CEO without too much drama.

Another excellent tip that I learnt fairly smartly was not to waste your time on exploring the unknown when developing new products if there

are professionals who have already got that knowledge. Pay for their knowledge because in the long run the cost saving far outweighs the consulting fee. They have done the hard yards and are aware of the traps and shortfalls.

Organisational Skills/Time Management

The ability to organise people and time is an essential skill to any successful business. Your approach to organising time management can cost or save the company money and contracts. I have always contended that women are better at this because they focus on the finer details whereas males find this boring and thus are inclined to neglect the essential housekeeping of business.

In the early days as Managing Director I turned my effort into identifying the cost structures involved in running the business. Change took place. Office staff were cut with the result that remaining staff worked more efficiently and gossip sessions decreased dramatically.

Weekly managers meetings were introduced, addressing labour, supply of raw materials and materials for production, debtors and creditors. At the end of every month monthly profit and loss figures are compiled. Utilising such reporting tools keep management constantly aware of the costs (dollars and time) of running the enterprise. A lot of small and medium enterprises neglect to pay attention to the above which can easily lead to their downfall.

And what does the above tell you? It should tell you that amongst other things one of my key roles is a glorified babysitter – that is the company minder. This is one of the most important roles in making sure a company stays on the right track.

Leadership and leadership behavioural styles are very important in being a CEO. Be sure the directions you are giving staff are clear and to the point. Think about the important words in what you are saying and emphasise these words so as the message is clear. At the end of a direction it is often helpful to ask the person what they perceive you have said. Giving clear directions is one of my bad points. Do I get some weird interpretations back but I am trying to improve on this.

Look at your leadership styles not only to help problem solving and decision making but also to develop levels of higher competency and commitment in performing tasks amongst staff. Different styles need to be utilised depending on the individual and the task to be performed. In time & with proper support employees should move through these models from an enthusiastic beginner to becoming peak performers.

“...don’t waste your time exploring the unknown when developing new products if there are professionals who have already got that knowledge.”

“Look at your leadership styles not only to help problem solving and decision making but also to develop levels of higher competency and commitment in performing tasks amongst staff.”

~ Michelle Nugan

"...as we approach the year 2000 men and women in business are making a genuine effort to get on and try to understand each other's different behavioural patterns."

"Women hold up one half of the sky and the other half is held up by men."

~ Michelle Nugan



The idea of utilising these models is to provide a basic mechanism for running a successful business by ensuring productive and satisfied employees. When harmony prevails in a business the potential of the business is maximised. As mentioned before praise plays a very important part in maintaining commitments and competency.

CEO's and managers must let go of some tasks once a trainee has reached a satisfactory level in order that the particular person gains self confidence and increased self esteem. In other words you have to cut the umbilical cord. If necessary it can always be reconnected.

Being a women in business hasn't been a disadvantage. I like being a female and like to think that I'm feminine. I enjoy working with my fellow males. I love pink. And no matter how tough I may be in business, I hope in my private life that I'm a loving caring Mum and wife and friend. I can't ever recollect any problems in the work place with sexual harassment. I guess because I never let it develop. My time is better utilised in other ways.

I am proud to see that as we approach the year 2000 men and women in business are making a genuine effort to get on and try to understand each other's different behavioural patterns. There is also a move for more flexibility in the work place and working hours. This has to be a great advantage to businesses in rural Australia. There is so much untapped talent of women that if nurtured could be developed and utilised to Australia's benefit.

There is a little Chinese proverb that rather takes my fancy: "Women hold up one half of the sky and the other half is held up by men". We should all keep this in the back of our minds.

Roslyn Lambert ~ "How can I get somewhere if I don't know where I'm going....?"

"How can I get somewhere if I don't know where I'm going?" And even if you do know where you want to go, how do you get there? For all of us there are times where the future is either non-existent, shady, covered in thorns and completely unobtainable, or all the above!

Roslyn is Managing Director of her own consultancy, Collaborative Business, a company providing hands-on training and materials to improve your skills in dealing with conflict and negotiation. She is the immediate past Executive Manager of Women & Management Inc., the largest women's professional organisation which fosters the development and promotion of women involved in or aspiring to senior management.

Roslyn's ongoing commitment to help women achieve their goals culminated in her being awarded the 'Avon Spirit of Achievement Award' in 1996 in the Business Category. She is a consultant to the Board of 'CanTeen' The Australian Teenage Cancer Patients' Society Ltd.

Roslyn is keen to share her life-found skills with women who are eager to move from their present thinking and advance their position.

“How can I get somewhere if I don't know where I'm going...”

When Margaret Carroll asked me to talk on this subject I laughed like a drain. That morning I had come into the building I was renting for my office and there was a large 'For Sale' sign on it. We had been in that building there for 5 years, on a good cheap rent, then on a monthly tenancy. What would I do?

Firstly, I would agree to come to Orange – that was an easy decision even though I had no idea what I would talk about. For someone who had known for many years where I was going, now here I was with an office dilemma. To add to the confusion, I had literally just finished doing major repair work to my home and I lived in the house through the mess and chaos (five months), my partner was overseas having a holiday with his family and had had a major operation, my father was dying (but he had been for the last three years) and I was trying to put 25 years of family memorabilia and life back into the revamped house or on the garage sale pile. That's why it was really easy to say “yes” to being here. It was a light on the horizon.

Then I found out that the office had been sold, it was to be revamped, tarted up and of course the rent would go up. “Where was I going, what did I want to do?” All of a sudden I got very tired. To hide from reality I decided to spend one wet Saturday in bed. I don't do this very often but when I do it's great. Me, sometimes the radio, Saturday's Herald (plus all the other unread magazines and papers) and a large mug of tea and the answer phone on and if I've prepared myself well, a couple of Mars bars in the fridge. When the going gets tough for me I take to my bed. Veg out. Slothful. Absolute bliss.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to think about my life, to document the fear of not knowing where I'm going, how I'll get there and how I draw on past success and failures to get me to that next place in my life.

Today I will retrace the steps that helped me work out where I'm going. We are going to look at success – what others have said about it, what it meant and now means for me. Also we will look at how we 'should' look on ourselves – our joys, our talents and skills, our fears and the risks we may have to face.



“Thank you for giving me the opportunity to think about my life, to document the fear of not knowing where I'm going, how I'll get there and how I draw on past success and failures to get me to that next place in my life.”

~ Ros Lambert

"The idea of living in a way which truly reflects our values - to do the things we regard as worthwhile - is an age-old journey."

"Mum, can boys be doctors too?"

"Work out some of the things that you never want to do again and trade them off."

~ Ros Lambert

Ruth Cotton, a management consultant who said in her book 'Reinventing Success' (Random House) that she believes there is a shift underway as to what success actually means. She goes on... "We are no longer prepared to assess our lives against those old external measures. We are climbing new and personal definitions of success which are rich and diverse." And let me say that I believe some people are waking up to see that their ladder to success is leaning against the wrong wall.

There is an enormous amount of confusion and headache among many of the senior executives who come to see Ruth Cotton. These are people who all their lives have done what they considered was 'the right thing', often to please their parents, and now they are wondering why they feel so miserable.

Philosopher, Joseph Campbell wrote "The world is full of people who have stopped listening to themselves, or have listened only to neighbours to learn what they ought to do, how they ought to do it, how they ought to behave, and what values they should be living for". In reinventing success we are treading a well-worn path. The idea of living in a way which truly reflects our values and to do the things we regard as worthwhile is an age-old journey.

Bob Ellis talked about how consumerism rather than living a life reflects our values as the definition of success. "A few years ago a successful man was one who, say, had run a small business with four employees for 35 years, raised three children who had gone to college, served two terms as an alderman on the municipal council and retired at 62 to a unit in Surfers. Now a successful man, to be called a successful man must own billions, and control the broadcast rights to outer space. He must be as famous as Michael Jackson... or must star at the very least in a show named after him, like Seinfeld. This tough new measure of success is causing the world to fall like despondency. We try to silence the reality and fears by working harder and ignoring the signals of our body and mind.

When I was growing up my father could not believe that I wanted to 'do something' rather than have a wonderful life as a housewife. I'd seen all the women in my family do something. My grandmother ran a boarding house for single male bank workers in the 20's, my aunt was a milliner, my mother ran a delicatessen shop in Sydney and imported smelly cheeses in the 50's. And my dad thought I was going to be a housewife!

As a little aside, my 4 year old grandson, on meeting the new male family doctor asked his mother: "Mum, can boys be doctors too?" Bless the lad!!

So how do “We as women find out what we really want to do?” Firstly, ask yourself, “What do you never want to do again?” For me it’s cleaning the house, understanding car mechanics, to ever be a house painter and work for a certain plumber.

So often when women sit down with the family, setting out an emotionless list of how the household has been run in the past and her options for getting things done differently and more equitably in the future, so often the family will be genuinely surprised at how much of the work was being done by her. Because she hadn’t complained, they simply took for granted that she was happy with the way the chores were being done. Work out some of the things that you never want to do again and trade them off.

This leads me to that good old way we let our self-talk give us a hard time. It’s called SHOULDING on ourselves.

When life begins with a SHOULD it leads you to guilt, blame and anger. I SHOULD make my daughter’s bed because when she gets home she’ll be tired from all that studying. And what happens when your daughter comes home and doesn’t say “thanks Mum for making my bed”. You feel angry, and hurt that your kindness and thoughtfulness went unnoticed and unacknowledged. So why did you make the bed? Because you SHOULD or because you like seeing your daughters bedroom tidy, or we’ve got the house up for sale and I know it will be better to leave it tidy than messy. It’s a benefit for you, not your daughter.

We wouldn’t be human if we hadn’t uttered some SHOULDs at some time. I SHOULD save each payday, I SHOULD be thinner, I SHOULD phone my mum more often. Yes I SHOULD learn to swim, ONLY if we were to turn it round from a SHOULD to a BENEFIT, ie “If I learned to swim I could then play all those water games with the kids. They always have such fun. It’s what you do with your SHOULDs that matters – changing them from SHOULD to YOU taking responsibility for why you are giving yourself such a hard time about them. I SHOULD clean out the fridge.

Gretel Killeen - author and comic says “Everyone will try to stop you striving for your dream, especially yourself!” So if you can’t trade off some of the chores of life, change them into benefits. But that can be hard, because for things to change YOU must change.

What is passion? It comes from the heart. It has feeling. To fulfil a passion is to express deeply held feelings. You don’t figure out a passion you experience it. It is a desire to take action. Passion is strong and compelling and urgent. Passion allows us to be truly alive!

“Everyone will try to stop you striving for your dream, especially yourself!”

“You don’t figure out a passion you experience it.”

~ Ros Lambert

*"Do the one thing that you would regret never having done if your life ended tomorrow."
(Simone de Beavoir)*

Greta Garbo never did say, I want to be alone. She did say "I want to be left alone." There is a great difference...

Do something that would make others say, "That's so out of character for her!" (Isadora Duncan)

*"Do the one thing that you've been told is impossible to do and feel the triumph that comes from overcoming the fear of others."
(Sojourner Truth)*

*"Leave the bed unmade today..."
(Louisa May Alcott 'Little Women')*

"...the story of two stone masons: A visitor asked the first man what he is doing and he says "cutting stone", the second man says "building a cathedral".

~ Ros Lambert

Last year one of the finalists of the Avon Spirit of Achievements was Margaret Horsbourne a woman in her 80's, is barely 5 feet tall. She looks like a small 10 year old. Margaret has for so long been so publicly opposed to the Hinchinbrook development. Margaret sat next to me during the photo session of the finalists and asked me if she could hold my hand as she was so nervous. This award presentation and public acknowledgment of her achievements were nearly making her sick. I could only laugh internally at what seemed to me so silly for someone who had achieved so much in the face of danger. She went on to say "I'd much rather be facing a bulldozer than all you kindly people. I'm terrified!!!" Margaret's passion certainly showed. Whether you are for or against her motives, it doesn't matter. What matters is her passion for her cause, and it keeps her striving, at 80 plus.

What are you passionate about? And if it's keeping your daughter's bedroom tidy, go to it. Just remember it won't make very interesting dinner conversation. Let's move onto some other words to help us get the passion.

Meaning. Meaning is the significance that YOU attach to an event, person or situation. You can give meaning to whatever you do. Here is the story of two stone masons: A visitor asked the first man what he is doing and he says "cutting stone", the second man says "building a cathedral".

When I was cleaning out my fridge I was giving the purpose some meaning; making it easier to find my way around the cavern of the back of the fridge, talking on the phone to my friend and having a bit of fun along the way. If you can add meaning to the purpose in your life you will move well away from the SHOULDs of life to making the things you need to do more enjoyable.

What's joy? What gave you joy when you were a child, what's giving you joy now? For me it's now getting my cymbidian orchids to flower beautifully (it's the banana peel) and the African violets aren't doing too badly either. You may have noticed that I haven't talked much about work. Stay tuned.

What are your talents? Talents are abilities which seem to come naturally. I believe I have a talent of perception and maybe that is why I went on to learn about conflict resolution. What are your talents? What are your skills? Skills are learned. I did not have a natural talent for driving the car or the video, but both are now skills.

Now we can merge our talents and skills. Dick Smith used to go to my primary school and his talent was selling guinea pigs behind the toilet block. It certainly led to a great marketing skill for him. There are women who just love children and go on to have their own pre-school business.

But what do we do and where do we go when we get scared? Has anyone seen 'The Full Monty'? It is about fear of failure, fear of success and fear of the unknown, among others – Fear says 'You'll fail'. Fear tastes awful. Fear smells – fear of change.

What is the worst thing that can happen to me. I'm not going to fail. I'm taking a risk. Face the fear and feel it. Take a little risk and feel a little fear. No need to bungee jump first off. Take a risk like driving a new route to work, serving the pavlova before the BBQ, telling someone you love "I love you", risk being embarrassed. Speak out at a meeting, ask what a word means when someone uses language you don't understand. Do something silly.

If you don't learn to be a risk taker today you won't be able to take a risk when you are faced with a great opportunity. Your moment will pass because you weren't ready.

Dick Leider said in "The Power of Purpose" – "There are two ways to be rich; one is to have more, the other is to want less."

Purpose comes through intuition. Ask yourself, "What if?" and sit with the reaction. Don't push it, let it wash over you in the shower. Let the thoughts incubate and germinate. Be open to all possibilities, all options. I asked myself, what would I do when the building I was renting for my office had a 'For Sale' sign on it? So what am I going to do in the future?

Let me take you back to my Saturday in bed. I asked myself 'Why not bring the office home? The staff can work from their homes, electronically, digitally and I can join the hundreds who now meet businesses colleagues in coffee shops all over Sydney.'

Uncertainty can lead to great opportunity because The land of opportunity is an attitude. It is, an openness to new ideas, a willingness to listen, an eagerness to learn, a desire to grow, and the flexibility to change.

Take all your successes and failures, shoulds and purposes, talents and skills, fears and risks, and put them gently with you under the doona, in the shower (did you hear about the fellow who spends 4 hours in the bath on Sunday morning, so he can listen to Macca uninterrupted?).

Take your life somewhere quiet and listen to it. That's what those clever elderly folk are doing sitting in the air-conditioning in the supermarket in summer. They are off with the fairies, giving their innermost thoughts an uninterrupted run for the day. Give it a go, slow down and listen to yourself. You'll be astounded at how clever your intuition is.

"Risk – take a little risk and feel a little fear. No need to bungee jump first off."

*"There are two ways to be rich; one is to have more, the other is to want less."
(Dick Leider)*

"Uncertainty can lead to great opportunity because The land of opportunity is an attitude!"

"Take your life somewhere quiet and listen to it."

"The former is never in your control and the latter always is."

~ Ros Lambert

Change one thing about yourself that you really want to change but you've been afraid to because of how others might react. "Be willing to trade security for happiness. The former is never in your control and the latter always is." (Margaret Chase Smith)

Give yourself permission to NOT do things that you think you should or must do. Thank you for letting me find my passion and reflecting on how to find it.

Marian Tye ~ Map your own pathways & develop a mentor portfolio

Marian is currently Concept Developer for IMAGO Multimedia Centre Ltd. Her activities include assisting IMAGO with strategic planning, the evolution of business models, and facilitating the concept development plan for the New Media Village Project.

The main thrust of her work at IMAGO is directed towards the needs of emerging businesses in an emerging industry and examining the potential for collaborative business networks. She also assists large organisations with her scenario planning related to positioning in the on-line economy, small business clients in the area of on-line business, and projects directed towards regional and remote communication.

On secondment from Edith Cowan University where she is a senior lecturer in Innovation and Enterprise, Marian has been involved in the area of enterprise development for the past eight years. Her role as Executive Director of the WA Enterprise Workshop enabled her to work closely and extensively with all levels of business and industry.

With a special interest and expertise in business mentoring (she was awarded the 1994 Western Australian Women's Fellowship for her work in this field), Marian through her company TeamWorks Australia advises a number of organisations regarding the design of mentor programs suited to their specific needs. In addition she facilitates the mentor scheme for the Curtin University Small Business Growth Program, a nationally recognised program for growth of small and medium size enterprises, and contributes to a major initiative aimed at skilling bank managers to better service the needs of their small business clients.

Although presently working in the area of enterprise development and its application to the multimedia industry, Marian has a background in diverse areas including sport, education and the Performing Arts. Currently completing a PhD related to business mentoring, other qualifications include a Master of Arts (modern dance), a Bachelor of Physical Education and a Diploma of Teaching. She has lived, worked and studied in several countries including Italy, USA, Canada and England.



The booklet
**I Need a
Mentor(s) Don't
I?**

is available from:
**The Australian
Federation of
Business &
Professional Women
Inc.
PO Box 617,
Belconnen ACT 2617,**

**☎(02) 9879 6379,
Fax (02) 9908 3508**

Marian is a member of the Australian Institute of Management, the Australian Institute of Company Directors and the WA Club. She has recently been appointed by the Minister for the Arts to the Arts WA Investment Panel and is a board member of the Westrek Foundation where she continues to give her support to the youth of Western Australia.

This workshop was based on the booklet 'I Need a Mentor(s) Don't I?' It's a guide to finding and using multiple mentors written by Marian for the Australian Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW).

The session discussed the use of the term 'mentor' and in particular the current trend which likens having a mentor with the recent fitness fad of having a personal trainer.

The main thrust of the talk revolved around the need to take responsibility for finding help rather than relying on signing up for a mentoring program and the expectation that one person will be able to alleviate the burden.

Identifying the type of help needed was stressed as the key to getting the right person to help. The goal setting exercises outlined in the booklet was used to highlight areas of importance and commitment.

The terms interchangeably used with the term 'mentor' were explored: including, teacher, coach, sponsor, protector, role model, master, counsellor, guide, adviser, leader, supporter & friend.

The point being made was if you know the sort of help need you can find a number of people to help in that way. It is a big ask for one person to be all the things you need.

It was suggested that when looking for someone suitable, there are some personal attributes to consider. Ideally a mentor would be someone with the ability to listen, support, challenge, encourage, protect and provide wise counsel.

Strategies for finding a mentor were outlined and the importance of personal preparation. Considerations included the ability to put oneself into the mentor's shoes, consider what the mentor will need to know about you, communicate your needs effectively, understand your own view point and be prepared to look at it from another angle and prepare an exit from the relationship.

Overall the workshop emphasised the value of others as a resource and encouraged the audience to seek out assistance rather than wait for it to appear.

"Ideally a mentor would be someone with the ability to listen, support, challenge, encourage, protect and provide wise counsel."

"Mentors are not mysterious beings out there waiting to be discovered. They are waiting for you to contact them!"

"Remember you can be a mentor learning from others and be a mentee to others at the same time."

~ Marian Tye

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☎(02) 6391 3620

Fax (02) 6391 3650

Workshops

Participants' comments from evaluation sheets

Recognition of Prior Learning ~

"Beneficial to help me start to acknowledge my own ability, skills and experiences."

Working the System ~

"Very adaptive to all work and life situations."

Effective Public Speaking ~

"I will tackle public speaking with a different approach."

"Learnt so much - would like to do a two day workshop with Lyn. A real learning curve."

Managing People and Relationships ~

"Great self-learning experience."

Small Business ~

"The workshop wasn't what I expected though the content was informative."



Karen Heller ~ Recognition of prior learning (RPL)

In this workshop Karen explained the concept of recognition of women's skills & life experiences, why education & training providers have policies in RPL & how it can help you in your career prospects.

Karen is the Manager of TAFE's Women's Education & Training Unit which provides advice & support to management & staff on matters affecting women's access to education & training.

Cathie Sharp ~ Working the system

Workshop participants explored public participation in decision making, worked through exercises in challenging government decisions & discussed strategies towards effective advocacy.

Cathie is the Training Coordinator at the Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC). She was previously an independent consultant specialising in interpersonal communications, anti-discrimination & human rights issues.

Jan Hudson ~ Small Business - unlock the entrepreneur within

This workshop looked at chances, choices & opportunities for women in the 90's - where to start & where you may go from here – feeling good about yourself. Presentation & interviews to the challenges of today's marketplace.

Jan is the Manager of Services for the Bathurst Enterprise Centre & Western Business Innovation Centre. She sits on a number of national and regional Boards & is a former Mrs NSW & Mrs Australia.

Lyn Champion ~ Speaking effectively - how to have more confidence & speak with impact

Lyn showed how to be a winning & confident presenter, how to use verbal and nonverbal language well, how to conquer nerves & be your most persuasive.

Lyn was the 1993-94 Australian Executive Women of the Year, author, Corporate Image International Award Winner, Former President, National Speakers Association of Australia.

Lyn Sykes ~ Managing the people & relationships both at home & away

Lyn learnt from her own experiences & those of others. This workshop showed how to keep all the juggling balls of life in the air! Lyn works as a consultant. She facilitates family business meetings, teaches communication skills in many and varied situations & has a small counselling practice.

Marlene Farrell ~ Getting results from meetings

This workshop walked through the steps on how to organise meetings & demystify the rules governing chairing meetings. It enabled participants to be proactive & positive at meetings whatever their role - chairperson, executive officer or member.

Marlene Farrell is the Manager of the Commonwealth Employment Service, Orange and former Deputy Mayor, Orange City Council.

Roslyn Lambert ~ Women on boards - getting there & surviving!

This workshop focused on the strategies for surviving a Board appointment. Participants also looked at how to find Board opportunities, accept the challenges & maximise the strengths they bring to a Board position.

Roslyn is Managing Director of her own consultancy, 'Collaborative Business', a company providing hands on training & materials to improve skills in dealing with conflict & negotiation. She is immediate past Executive Manager of Women & Management Inc.

Lucy Broad ~ Working effectively with the media

The workshop explored selling messages to the media, what the media is looking for, effectively getting messages across and likely traps for the unwary.

Lucy is the National Editor ABC Rural Radio where she is responsible for the ABC's specialist rural programs on Local Radio and Radio National. She has a wide range of media experience working in TV and radio since 1981.

Kellie Penfold ~ Working effectively with the media

This workshop helped participants get to know the media industry – how to feel comfortable with the media – how to aim for the right market & to write a press release.

Kellie is currently a senior writer with The Land newspaper. She has worked as a newspaper editor & rural journalist for almost a decade. She also works as a public relations consultant & free-lance journalist while juggling life on the farm.

Margaret Helman ~ Women working with men

This workshop highlighted gender differences at work & some 'how to' skills for framing messages to be understood by men & build understanding. It showed there is no advancement without risk.

Participants' comments from evaluation sheets

Getting Results from Meetings ~

"Very informative and good handouts."

Women on Boards ~

"An abundance of experience and advice."

"It was interesting and inspiring to know that many of us already had the answers to many of the big questions."

Working Effectively with the Media ~

"Excellent facilitator - learnt a good deal; not enough time to cover everything."

Using the Media~

"Kelly gave lots of sound/logical advice which was very useful - perhaps an article for The Country Web."

Working with Men ~

"Excellent. Want more of this, really could have spent a whole day on it."

Margaret is a communications expert with specialist skills in interpersonal communication, cross cultural communication & gender differences in communication. She is a professional facilitator, trainer & company communications analyst.

*For more information on the above workshops or
for available workshop resources and information,
contact the Rural Women's Network on*

☎ (02) 6391 3620

Fax (02) 6391 3650

OR

*the individual facilitators (contact details for
facilitators can be found in the Networking List of
Participants (Page 68))*

