SARAH FERGUSON:
Hello. We've got some seats at the front. Does anyone want to come closer? It is a conversation, not a rap competition in a pub. Don't be shy, come on. That's better. Come on forward. I'm going to introduce our wonderful conversationalists to you in a moment. This is good, I like it when people come to the front! It makes it so much more fun. We can feel like there are people in the room listening and engaging with us, so it is much more fun for us.

If we are all going to turn out on a Wednesday night, we want to be inspired by these two excellent people but we absolutely want to have fun. First things first, and the very first thing in this wonderful location is Yvonne, from the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, who is going to give you a rousing Welcome to Country. You first.

(Applause)

YVONNE WELDON:
Just a bit of pressure! Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, sisters and brothers. As was said, my name is Yvonne Weldon. I am a Wiradjuri woman from Cowra, here in NSW. I am from the waters of the Kalare, also known as the Lachlan, and the Murrumbidgee rivers. I am the elected chairperson of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council who are the culture authority, under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, for the land we are meeting on. I'd like pay my respects to Elders past and present, and to all First Nations and First Nations people here this evening.

It is always a humbling privilege to provide Welcome to Country. My people's traditions and practices are varied across the lands and the waterways. For me, a Welcome is an profound honour and the luxury of time – time given by you and time for the many warriors that started the traditions for everyone.

A Welcome is not just words, it is a reflection of where we are. Not this modern-day structure, but a continual stream of life, lessons, purpose and nurturing supplies. We are meeting here on the lands of the Eora Nation. The boundaries of traditional owners are not defined by the hand or by the pen, but through the natural landscapes of the Earth. Eora Nation countries covers the Hawkesbury River in the north, the Nepean in the West, and the Georges River in the South.

Wherever you travel across this beautiful continent of ours, understand you are entering the lands of a nation, a tribe and a clan, which has existed here for over 60,000 years. The First Nations of this country are the oldest living culture in this world. And on behalf of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, the Elders, and the members, I welcome everyone to the land of the Gadigal and I acknowledge the Gadigal people, whose spirits and ancestors will always remain with this land, our Mother Earth.

Last year, the NAIDOC theme was 'Because of Her We Can'. I have been blessed to be taught by many incredible Wiradjuri women. My grandmothers, my aunties, Mum Michelle, Pauline, Isabelle and Betsy. And my staunch mother, Ann Weldon. We should acknowledge the many women who give so much to you and for you. They give endlessly because they believe in you and you should honour them and yourselves. And to give recognition of the never-ending dedication of women, would you all pause for a moment to remember the many sacrifices women have made along the way, the ones we will continue to make and the ones that should never happen.

The greatest gift you can give someone is your time. To all the mothers, grandmothers, aunts, sisters and daughters, I thank you for allowing us to flourish in your wisdom, your beauty and your love. You all play an important role in so many people's lives. This should be recognised, you are recognised, and I thank you.

And the mighty men in our lives, that walk beside us, fortifying our steps together, continue to walk with us bringing about a positive change for all of us. Not at the expense of one over the other, but because we can only make changes if we do so together. Our rights should be a given, not something we have to fight for. With our voice and our courage, we must create a legacy of a life we can be proud of.

To make our unified future possible, let's draw upon my people's spirits as we continue on our journey. May my people's spirits walk with you and guide you as we strive for us all. Again, on behalf of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, welcome to Gadigal land. Always was, always will be Aboriginal land. Thank you and have a wonderful evening.

(Applause)

SARAH FERGUSON:
Thank you, Yvonne. Thank you. Here we go: Michael, will you go there? I did a seating plan earlier. It took me half an hour. But I have got it. Yvonne, first of all, thank you for that beautiful Welcome to Country.

You talked about nurturing and lessons, warriors, you talk about the staunchness of the people who came before me and I can't think of a better set of words to describe these two generous people who have also given that very precious thing that Yvonne just talked about, which is time.

Michael is going away tomorrow on a trip: some of it is holiday, some of it is work. But it’s a big trip, he’s leaving tomorrow. Liz, we know is one of the busiest woman, in Australia… on the planet and beyond. And all of you have given up time to hear me make my microphone squeak, but have come to listen to what I hope will be a fascinating evening. So to all of us, thank you to these two people here and to all of you for sharing time, nurturing, life and lessons in the staunchest way we have got in the hour we have got. Let's go.

I will give little introductions. And when you do things like this, people send you – quite rightly – long CVs that list everything these two fine people have done, but I'm sure in coming here this evening you know Michael Spence is the Vice-Chancellor of Sydney University and you know about his academic career, so I am not going to embarrass him by listing all his awards and so on.

The key thing about Michael Spence is he is, of course, in relation to this evening and this public ideas event, he is a Male Champion of Change. He is also someone who is more than capable of disruptive change in his life. You may know he decided to learn Mandarin as an adult and managed to get so proficient he thinks he can make jokes in Mandarin. Since I am at lesson number two of my course in Mandarin, for my trip to China, I can say that is deeply impressive. But Michael is someone who understands change and has been an extraordinary leader in this field.

Sitting next to Michael, Liz Broderick. Again, I won't list all of her extraordinary achievements. She is just back from the UN, so I hope we get to hear, in her new role, of her very recent experiences during that stay in New York and the very extraordinary speech that she gave there which I recommend you have look at later.

Liz too, is someone who when she left the Human Rights Commission, amongst the many glowing tributes that were paid to this extraordinary, courageous woman – and her courage is one of the things referred to – she was also thanked by the people she worked with for being brave in disrupting the status quo, but at the same time Liz Broderick has been described as a stealth fighter. I think it is not a bad description for Liz, even if it has a slightly warlike ring to it, and that's because a stealth fighter has to manoeuvre past the heat, the sound and the emissions of its opponents in order to be successful, and that does sound to me a lot like Liz Broderick's impeccably handled management of those shouty people who are in such loud opposition to her determination to bring us to a more gender-equal world.

Unlike Teena McQueen – I don't know if all of you saw her this week, shot to infamy in the political sphere – Liz did not meet Donald Trump at a beauty pageant, finding him neither racist nor sexist. But what she met in New York was the more cogent reality of shifts in US policy towards women's rights around the world and I hope we are going to hear a bit about that.

You know Michael Spence has a distinguished career as a legal academic amongst other things, Liz began her career as a lawyer. So my simple job this evening, with two lawyers after a fashion, is to keep them off the straight and narrow and on the bumpy path to progress. So join me in welcoming these two generous, excellent people to the stage.

(Applause)

SARAH FERGUSON:
I promise that these two don't speak too fast, but maybe I did. Now I wanted to start with where we are right now, if I could. So we're in March 2019, we know that. It is two years since the birth of #metoo, coinciding with the rise of the Time's Up movement in the United States, which Donald Trump's Svengali, Steve Bannon, described as the most potent force in American politics. Just today Graeme Samuel said we needed a nuclear bomb to break down, blast down the walls of the female directors clubs in Sydney and in Australian business.

So, we have nuclear bombs breaking down walls of women female directors' clubs. That is just today. There is a lot going on, but both of you in recent days and weeks have talked about the backlash against the move for gender equality. Michael, if I could start with you, may I call you Michael? Thank you, got that sorted. You have talked about the backlash against gender equality, what do you mean and where do you see it?

DR MICHAEL SPENCE:
We have an academic Pippa Norris, who may be here, who teaches here and at Harvard. She is a joint appointment between our two institutions. She has done really interesting work on what it is that was behind Brexit, what it is behind Trump, what it is behind the rise of authoritarian populists in so many parts of the world.

The common narrative, of course, has to do with communities that are in some way economically disadvantaged or have seen living standards going backwards. But in fact, many people have done very well indeed voted for Trump and voting for Brexit. With her electoral analysis, the most plausible, I think, reading of what is going on in the global context is actually that there is a real culture war going on. And that there is a certain backlash against progressive values in the West at the moment.

And we are seeing that on our University campus. We're seeing… I could tell you a tedious and frightening story about the escapades of Bettina Arndt on our campus. We're seeing an extremity of language in response to change of a kind I that have not seen in my career at universities. And I think the backlash is quite visceral.

SARAH FERGUSON:
Liz, you talked about, at the United Nations' recent session, you praised Alan Joyce from Qantas, his presentation at that event, but you also said after that, that backlash would occur and we must manage the fear. So picking up what Michael said of the visceral fear of the backlash, what do you mean by managing the fear?

ELIZABETH BRODERICK:
I couldn't agree more with Michael, because we're seeing backlash not just here at Sydney Uni and across Australia. It is a global phenomenon. I couldn't agree more that this is about a fear of progressive values or what are seen as Western democratic values in different parts of the world.

And I think at the heart of that fear, what do people fear? They fear an undermining of some of the key institutions in nations. They fear that gender equality, if I bring it back to the gender equality issue, that gender equality and women's rights will undermine the family. That if women have equal power in the family, that that will undermine the institution of family, rather than seeing that if women have equal rights in the family, if women have the right to work outside the family, it actually builds economic resilience and is indeed protective of the family.

SARAH FERGUSON:
In what sense the family as opposed to the persona of the male which is what we hear about in relation to fear?

ELIZABETH BRODERICK:
It is very much, I suppose about the transfer of power: in nations, in organisations, from men to women as well. So there is no question that is a second fear.

Because if you look at the fear also about the fear in government, the fear of the church, all those key institutions, which have been created by men, for men, and are largely run by men, what we see when we are moving towards a more gender-equal world, we see that power then starts to be redistributed between men and women. And we can say, well, we need this to happen in a very peaceful and, I absolutely believe, dignified and respectful way; we need to move forward with change. But in many nations, because of a fear, because of a rhetoric and the things you are talking about, this is happening in a very destructive manner.

Can I just give you a couple of examples? Just last week in Iran, we saw a young woman was sentenced to 38 years imprisonment and 148 lashes. What was her crime? Her crime was that she was one of the top human rights lawyers in that nation and she acted for a group of women who took their hijabs off in public.

Today in Saudi Arabia, there is a cohort of women's human rights defenders who actually led the campaign to get women the right to drive. They are incarcerated, they are being tortured as we speak.

I mean I was in the UN last week, in New York. I met with delegations of New York-based NGOs. What did they tell me about what is happening in the United States of America at the minute? One of the representatives said, "Look Liz, in the last 12 months there have been 68 new pieces of law introduced in this nation which restrict women's rights to reproductive health and abortion."

This is in the United States! And I could go on with any number of examples. That's what it looks like.

SARAH FERGUSON:
Because you have just come back from the UN, how do those moves against reproductive rights work in the UN setting? What were you able to observe while you were there? Does it have an effect, or is that an American thing?

ELIZABETH BRODERICK:
It absolutely has an effect. Last week was the Commission on the Status of Women, it is the largest gender equality meeting the UN hosts every year. Last week it was the largest meeting they had ever had because more human rights defenders from across the world decided that this was the moment they would take their concerns to the UN. So that was one indicator of where we are at, just the scale of the meeting.

The other indicator was we started to see the US vote with non-traditional nations like Russia, like Turkey, like Egypt. We haven't seen that geopolitical alignment before. And when you look at what they are voting against, it is women's access to reproductive rights and health.

So if you had to look at the most controversial issue in the global human rights agenda today: it would be women's reproductive rights. That is probably the most controversial, together with LGBTIQ rights. There are still so many nations that still have terrible consequences in that area.

SARAH FERGUSON:
That is on the global scale. Michael, you say you have seen it even here at the University and you talk about the visceral nature of the backlash. What happens when people see that visceral backlash? Is it making people more cowed, and is it in danger of sucking from the importance of this movement its bravery and courage to mobilise together for change?

DR MICHAEL SPENCE:
No, I think it is much more concerning, particularly in the University community. If I might step back from the question for a minute, we are undoubtedly ground zero in the culture wars. You

know, something can happen at the University of Sydney and be all over the press in 5 minutes, that if it happens somewhere else nobody would notices.

SARAH FERGUSON:
Why is that?

DR MICHAEL SPENCE:
Because we are the most marvellous university in Australia, the crucible of ideas… (*Laughs*)

SARAH FERGUSON:
It is a bastion issue too though isn't it. And it's the history of the last few years.

DR MICHAEL SPENCE:
What we are seeing in the culture wars is a loss of the ability to disagree respectfully and well. So one of the things we built into our new curriculum is a conception of cultural competence. That you might have different views about, for example, the status of the foetus and women's reproductive rights, but you ought to be able to have that conversation in a political system that allows for difference and that allows for respectful dialogue about those issues across divides.

What we are seeing even in university communities is a lot more shouting, a lot more sloganeering. So the backlash takes the form not necessarily of people retreating, but of a certain sort of fear – I think that is right – a panic on both sides, and therefore people shouting past one another.

And for me, the function of a university in that, is to say, "Hang on, hang on, hang on: we have to be capable in a pluralist community of living together with different visions of the good; that has got to require, at a minimum, that I can try and inhabit your worldview and understand why you think the things you think and why you might make some of the assumptions you make, but also claim the right to say, 'No, I don't think that is how X, or Y, or Z, should go.'"

SARAH FERGUSON:
In the university setting, how is it going?

DR MICHAEL SPENCE:
In the university setting, this whole notion of disagreeing well is something we have been working on very consciously and I think we are doing better. But we are a locus for this argument nationally.

And I will tell you the Bettina Arndt story really quickly because it is at one level amusing and at another level terrifying. So Bettina Arndt wants to come and give a lecture on the 'fake rape crisis in universities'. She asked the University's Liberal Club, the University's Liberal Club invite her, they asked for us to give additional security and we charged them $375, which we do for all student clubs that ask for additional security, of the left or of the right. We do that so we don't have to make invidious choices about who to subsidize.

That went all around the country and into Federal Parliament about us 'taxing free speech'. Nevertheless, she comes. There is a protest. There is no damage to personal property. She

gives her lecture, with opinions with which I strongly disagree, but I strongly respect her right as an individual invited by the students to do this particular thing.

She brings a complaint against the student protesters, puts their names on her Facebook page, there is all this bile then that her supporters put out of things like, "I hope there is a rape crisis on campus, otherwise X wouldn't be able to get 'insert an expletive'." Just really horrible stuff. They have to take the names off the electoral rolls.

There is then, in the Senate, not of the University of Sydney, but the Senate of the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, a discussion about the 'Bettina Arndt affair at the University of Sydney', and the Teaching Education Qualities Standards Authority is commissioned, at taxpayer expense, to investigate the state of free speech at the University of Sydney. This leads to a national thing led by the…

And it is all because of this screaming conversation that we are having. And I think unless, on issues like gender, we can say, "Actually, we are not going to back down. But we are going to keep going and we're going to keep making the case calmly, rationally, well, and you can shout all you want but we're not going to give up." We're not going to make the kind of progress we need to make.

SARAH FERGUSON:
We will come back to your case in just a moment, we're just going to stay on, not just with the shouty space, but also the, in some cases, well-argued space.

There is controversial figure, you will all know of Jordan Peterson, perhaps more than any other commentator, he has successfully harnessed the fear you talk about. Thousands attend his speeches, millions more watch his presentations on YouTube. He says, "The differences between men and women are ineradicable and can only be changed through tyranny."

So, how much… is it the case that we have in some ways we have failed to sell your argument to a lot of people, that this argument is gaining so much traction through people like Jordan Peterson and his ideas?

DR MICHAEL SPENCE:
So the question is, is it gaining so much traction? Remember, for example, how many people voted progressively in the recent referendum.

The Jordan Petersons are very loud, but I think part of the reason that they are becoming shrill is that they sense they don't necessarily have a strong hold on the culture.

ELIZABETH BRODERICK:
I agree with that position. Having said that, a lot of young men that I meet – and it is one of the great things about my work, I get to engage with young men as well – they do listen to him. And they listen to him on some of the things he says where I think he is quite strong on some things.

It is on this issue that I just very much disagree with him. I think what we have to do is speak in a language that speaks to young men. And, you know it's great to see Tim Winton and people like that out there speaking to young men, because what we know about gender equality is it is

not a women's issue. It is a key social, economic issue. We need the engagement of men, and particularly young men.

SARAH FERGUSON:
You have got a pretty mixed crowd this evening, which is a huge credit to the University and to all of you. Because too many of these debates, we know, historically have happened in front of largely female gatherings.

But you're right, Jordan Peterson does speak to a community of men. Is there anything wrong with the language, or the nature of the argument that has been run to this point in terms of gender equality, that has excluded people? Has it done anything to contribute to that sense of fear that he has harnessed whether correctly or incorrectly, honestly or dishonestly - we're not here to judge what he says, some of the arguments are good – but have we failed in some ways to include? That we have bludgeoned rather than nudged, we have used language that excludes?

ELIZABETH BRODERICK:
Maybe we have. I think change happens on a continuum and you need a whole lot of actors to create change. So you need the very noisy, really radical agents of change. You need those who work more within the system, and that is where I see my work: I work within the system to try and stretch it out as much as I can.

So every one of us has a place on the continuum of change. But in terms of engagement, I do think that in many men's minds, gender equality is seen as a women's issue, women's business. And maybe we as women have said that is how it needs to be.

I know if I come back to the Male Champions of Change strategy which I hope we will talk about, it still is a very controversial strategy. Part of the reason for that is, "Wait a tick, we don't need men speaking for women," which Male Champions don't. It is also, "This is our business, this is women's business."

My view is it is that it is the collective action of women that has got us the rights we have, not just in Australia but globally. Without the suffragettes, the second wave feminists and everyone else, we would not be able to have basic rights that we have.

But if I look to the future, I'm not prepared to continue to wait. And if we want an accelerant, I believe that we have to work with power and the fact is men hold power in every nation in the world and every organisation. So why wouldn't we work with decent men? It is not a zero-sum game, it is men and women working together to create a gender equal future and that most definitely includes young men.

SARAH FERGUSON:
So much of the debate around this issue is precisely around the notion of those accelerants, what is an acceptable level or quantity of accelerant you can apply to a social issue like gender equality?

Their argument from the other side is it should be equality of opportunity, not equality of outcome. That the former will provide the outcome. How do you, Michael I ask this to you, protect merit while changing gender balance?

DR MICHAEL SPENCE:
So I don't think those two… I am proud to be able to say that at the moment we have more than 50% women on the Senate, on the University Executive and the University's Academic Board. And I don't think decision-making in each of those groups has ever been stronger.

And that is not surprising because all the social science demonstrates that mixed gender groups make better decisions, weigh risk better, take risks more appropriately, and just perform better on all the indices of effectiveness.

So, I think the merit-equality dichotomy is simply a false one. And if you like, you might say, well, in environments that traditionally excluded women, inevitably they excluded 51% or whatever it is, 51% of the population from the merit consideration, and therefore if we assume as a given the sort of standard distribution of talent in the human population, they are not looking at, choosing from a particularly meritorious board.

SARAH FERGUSON:
So how much accelerant do you want? How much do you want to change the way that people access tertiary jobs, access jobs, graduate employment, how much accelerant do you think society wants to apply to change the current gender balance?

DR MICHAEL SPENCE:
The big question there is targets or quotas? I think targets are a great start. I think there are context in which targets don't work and you may need a quota, but my experience is that if you continually put the numbers in front of people and you continually send people back to look again for the talent that they say is not there, things do sort themselves out.

SARAH FERGUSON:
When you say 'things sort themselves out', it makes it sound as if it is inevitable and it doesn't need to be controlled once you have made that important first step.

DR MICHAEL SPENCE:
No, you have to do it quite subconsciously. Gender is kind of interesting because we are at a particular point in that argument. I am equally passionate about, if not slightly more personally passionate about, making Australia genuinely a multicultural society and not merely one of parallel monocultures.

And that's really interesting because 25% of Australians are of non-European ethnicity, but less than 2% are in senior leadership positions of one kind or another broadly defined across government, across the private sector and across universities. And even though now we know since at least the 1970s, the high school system and the universities have been turning out very very bright people, particularly of East Asian ethnicity who then just disappear – as one HR person in a bank said to me, because they realise Australia is not a place for East Asians so they go off to London, or New York or Hong Kong.

And that is interesting because I think we are at the point in the gender conversation where, with targets, with pushing, cajoling, in an institution you can make a difference. In the cultural and linguistic diversity position, we are a million miles behind that. And there, there is an interesting question about whether or not you need quotas for kick-start.

So I think it is about the right response for the right moment in the right conversation.

SARAH FERGUSON:
Liz, you raised Male Champions of Change, and we have already said Michael is one of those. In your recent study of how the numbers have gone over the last nearly 10 years, there was one figure that stood out, which was in terms of graduate employment, I think it was only 54% of the companies that are part of the group had achieved full equality in terms of graduate employment.

And I don't know how many people in this room are yet to get their first graduate employment, you may already be home and hosed, I hope so. Why is that proving so stubborn?

ELIZABETH BRODERICK:
Because that includes the military, the police, the intelligence agencies and whatever.

Having said that, the figure I'm looking at is the promotion figure and what it shows is that nearly 80% of Male Champions of Change organisations, in those organisations, 80% of them, women are promoted at above their representation level which I think is important.

But, of course, recruitment is so very important, and we know from the data is that women are doing well in the educational setting. There are some exceptions and I particularly note the situation for my Indigenous sisters. But by and large, women are doing and outperforming men on educational attainment. But that is not translating into strong progress within the workplace, particularly at the most senior levels.

I'm not sure what the stat is now, but a few years ago when I looked at it, there were more men named Peter as CEOs of ASX200 companies than there were women. So I don't know what that is, but I know I don't like it. So when we look at women's progression, particularly in STEMM fields, they are significantly underrepresented particularly given the level of educational attainment.

Coming back to the question of accelerant and intentionality, we absolutely have to be intentional because if we don't actively and intentionally include women, the system will unintentionally exclude them. And for all the reasons that the system has been by and large invented by men, for men and is largely run by men.

But I absolutely agree that the push on gender has not lifted all women equally. And I would say that particularly in relation to culturally and linguistically diverse women. Because even if I look at the few numbers of women, although we are at about 30% now on ASX 200 boards, but in the C-suite it'll less than that, but you are still not seeing the numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse women that we should be seeing given the proportion that they make up in Australia.

DR MICHAEL SPENCE:
I would like to bring the backlash thing, and that point that Liz is making about intentional change and the role of men in this together, in relation to something that we are trying to do at the University.

So one of the things about the accelerant is it always assumes that there is a problem, and the problem is the exclusion of women or the exclusion of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and you are working to solve this problem. But I think you need to cast, to include men and make change, you need to cast the problem in a slightly bigger frame and a slightly different frame.

A couple of years ago, I had all my team read a book we have been thinking a lot about, by Claude Steele, who is a social psychologist at Stanford. He was the Provost of UCLA. He works not on the impact of stereotyping on the perception of performance, but on the impact of stereotyping on performance itself.

And perhaps in his most famous experiment, which he has done in several places around the world and all the rest of it, he takes bright groups, equally able groups as far as you can tell, and they are statistically large enough to iron out the variances and all the rest of it, but of mathematically-able East Asian women. And if you do something before a maths test that reminds them of their gender, they do poorly on the test because everybody knows that girls are bad at maths. If you do something that reminds them of their ethnicity before the test, they do well because everyone knows Asians are good at maths.

Part of what we have been saying to young people, men and women, is how does the story you tell about yourself and other people and how does the story the community tells about you, or what a policeman is, or what someone who works in the Army is, hold you back? And therefore, if you are a man, hold you back from enjoying your family in the way you might enjoy it if you were able to participate more fully in child rearing and in the life of the home? Or if you're a woman, how does it hold you back in the way that you think about applying for promotions or whatever?

So I think part of the reframing for a new generation also has to be about the way in which we use these categories to limit the possible for each of us. And I think that also overcomes your merit problem because it then also opens up, as it where, the possibilities for all of us. Given that power is unevenly distributed, and it will be skewed, and we have to be intentional and all the rest of it, I nevertheless think there is a way of inviting men in that reduces some of the backlash and means you don't end up having targets and quotas conversations in quite the same way.

ELIZABETH BRODERICK:
That story we tell ourselves, even as a nation, for example, that only women make good carers, things like that, I think the external media – not just the media but the private sector organisations and others – have a big part in that story as well.

I'm thinking about the 'Unstereotype' campaigns, the Gillette ad and some of those things. Unilver and a number of there big fast-moving goods companies. A couple of years ago they

launched what they called 'Unstereotype' and it was really a pledge that they pledged never to enforce adverse social norms through their advertising and marketing in any nation of the world.

And as a result of that pledge they have been going through different product lines, hundreds of thousands of them, looking at how that advertising is promoted. The one that I am thinking of, I don't know if anyone uses Lynx deodorant in the audience here, but you used to have a Lynx ad which was, can I pull all the chicks with my big abs and whatever? It has now moved to an ad which is, find your magic. Are you the dude with the big nose, the one in the wheelchair, the one who likes books, reading and music?

Just as a result of that shift, not only have they sold many more cans of Lynx, and I know because my son buys many of them. But they have started to change the story. And I think that Gillette ad which had a huge conversation across different nations – I know it did here in Australia and many other Western democracies as well – I think those types of initiatives are also really important in changing the story.

Because stereotypes imprison men as much as they imprison women.

DR MICHAEL SPENCE:
The reason that is important is because the action now, I think, particularly in gender but not only, is really in shifting culture. And we have this peculiar culture… *(Laughs)* I had a female student say to me, a couple of years ago, "It just does my head in." I asked her why and she said, "I inhabit some social environments, online environments, where it is just like Tarzan and Jane and all the imagery is really brutal and all the boys want to get great abs and drink themselves silly, and all the women want to make themselves attractive and it is really icky. Then I go to student politics meetings and I have to say that my name is Betsy and my preferred personal pronoun is she."

We have this bizarre bifurcation in the lives of young people at the moment.

SARAH FERGUSON:
What do you do? About that?

DR MICHAEL SPENCE:
I think you do this: you consciously work on the culture. **1:05:04**

SARAH FERGUSON:
You mentioned before you have achieved a much better or, in fact, a successful gender balance in the boards, on the University boards. This is a point about the University, just to understand how this works at the micro-level here at the University. How do you ensure the things you set out to achieve through your own personal leadership in an organisation of this size and diversity continues down to middle level/lower level areas of the University?

Everything you say sounds spot on. We are talking about a profound change to the culture, which is something we can all agree on. But functionally, on a day to day basis, what do you do about ensuring that that culture is felt throughout an organisation of this size and complexity.

DR MICHAEL SPENCE:
So you know, the Business School would tell you that you set KPIs and you are conscious about it and you do all of that sort of stuff.

You do, but universities, like society more generally, are communities of discourse. And I think, part of it is just keep talking. I am a great believer in hypocrisy: you make it uncomfortable for people to say really horrible things because after a while they will stop believing them. And you just keep saying the right thing.

The problem with that, of course, is that in our institution, at the moment, one of our cultural challenges – and not just in gender diversity and other areas of diversity but in our productivity and all sorts of things – there is a geriarchy of men who have a certain amount of cultural power. You know, we had a 650-people town hall a couple of weeks ago, followed the next day by a meeting of the Academic Board where not one woman spoke or asked a question, and where all the questions were what you might kind of call 'old Sydney' questions. In Academic Board, I said, “Hang on, we haven't had any questions from women either yesterday or today and the research shows that if women ask questions, it makes a more balanced conversation for the room and other people feel free to contribute. So can we…?”

And then an old white man asked another question and we kind of moved on. *(Laughter)*

But what was encouraging and distressing was that the next day after the town hall, I got lots of emails from women, particularly younger women, who said, "Those old men don't speak for me. And I think X, and Y, and Z."

SARAH FERGUSON:
That is depressing, what do you do about it? You have one of the most vibrantly culturally intellectual communities in the country and you still got that problem.

DR MICHAEL SPENCE:
I think the answer is… So I was incredibly depressed and incredibly encouraged. Depressed because that was the context. Encouraged because they felt at least they could reach out to the CEO and say, "This is an issue." And I think you keep, by a million actions of guerrilla warfare, trying to shift the culture, trying to shift the parameters of what it is. Of course not that it is a University, everyone can say what they like, but of the acceptable and unacceptable forms of behaviour, and conduct and conversation in terms of our core values around diversity and inclusion.

ELIZABETH BRODERICK:
But just adding to that, Michael, you know the shadow you cast as a leader is so very important. And I think you actually intervening and asking that question has potential, so that makes a difference. But how you act, what you measure and what you prioritise are all important things.

And the other thing is vulnerability: I think what you are trying to do there is create a psychologically safe environment. Now clearly those women who wrote to you off-line, they did not feel it was psychologically safe to ask, in either the 650-person meeting or later in the Academic Board, a question. But they knew you were a someone who was a good person, decent enough to respond to the concerns that they have.

So the question is, how do you develop that environment of shared vulnerability? I think you do it through the way you lead in terms of being vulnerable and showing that vulnerability. The question for me is, how do you get that down the layers? Because I suppose they are probably not looking at you when they choose not to speak. They are looking at Fred, who is actually their supervisor or their supervisor's supervisor. That is what makes them not speak. If you were having a one-on-one conversation, even if it was more men than women, they would have spoken out, I do think.

So the question is, how do you infuse it? What I say is less intellect more humanity. That's really what we're shooting for.

DR MICHAEL SPENCE:
It goes to how you pick leaders in the organisation. You got to do that consciously. But it is also to do with how you model the kinds of things that you think are important, and for us it has also been about having a very explicit values conversation.

Now as part of our last strategy, we had a research section, an education section and a culture section. We spent 12 months consulting on our values. I then wrote a consultation paper reflecting the consultation about our values. We then we consulted on the consultation paper about our values.

The good thing is now people actually use them in conversation and as standards for their own or other people's behaviours, as Herbert Hart would've said. And I think that begins to make it more difficult for the leader who is not committed to creating an inclusive community to actually keep it up.

SARAH FERGUSON:
One of the problems that we face, and I don't want to get stuck in politics, we have this huge problem in Australia at the moment that one of the worst examples in this area, one of the absolute worst, if not the worst example, is coming from federal politics. So if you want to talk about leadership and the nature of leadership, how that affects individuals in an organisation, in terms of federal politics, we are at an extremely low point. We still have a problem of gender imbalance in the Parliament of quite extraordinary capacity.

Let's just go to that question of how we change that. I think the UNDP said in the '90s that it takes 30% of representation in politics for women to have an effective voice in politics. What do we do about the lousy example that is being set in federal politics?

ELIZABETH BRODERICK:
Well, I have given my advice. That is that without a target/quota, what I call a temporary special measure, it will not shift. Because what a temporary special measure does is it firstly crystallises our intent. So our intent is we want a gender diverse party/parliament or whatever it is.

It crystallises our intent, it signals to the external environment and internally within the party that this is a priority for us. And not only that, we will then embark on a series of strategies – some of which will not work, and those ones we will throw out quickly because we still have our temporary special measure, our target – those that do deliver, we are going to start investing in and ramping up more.

There are so many parliaments across the world. I look at it through my work in the UN. I have to say, one of the most empowering moments for me in the work that I've done was when I was with the parliament in Pakistan. I was in Islamabad, or Karachi, I can't quite remember now, but I met there with the Women's Parliamentary Corpus. These were women from every different Parliamentary party. Many of them got there on reserved seats, and I always a bit, I don't know about that, because it will be a male parliamentarians putting their wife up for a seat and then telling her how to vote.

But I went to the meeting and they came together and said, "Well, what do we care about as women? Put the politics away, what do we care about as women? We want to live a life free from violence. We want an education for our children. We want to eradicate poverty." So they basically went through a list of demands, and these were women, some of whom were wearing the full niqab, they were of all different political persuasions. And when I left them, as one group they were on their way to the Prime Minister with a list of demands, from the women of the parliament, that they wanted in their nation.

And yes, Pakistan is, in terms of gender equality, very low on the World Economic Forum's index. But to see that level of women coming across different parties together was very very empowering. And I just have to say, Sarah, we have a Male Champions of Change Pakistan. They are actually meeting this week and connecting also with the Male Champions of Change Australia, and it is just incredible to see some of the innovation happening in that nation and some of their desire and hunger for strategies which have delivered impact here in Australia, which may assist in delivering impact in Pakistan. And back the other way.

SARAH FERGUSON:
Perhaps you could bring them back here to teach the Australian Parliament how to do it. Because they need to know how to do it.

ELIZABETH BRODERICK:
Maybe, you are probably right.

SARAH FERGUSON:
You both raised the idea of the speed of change, the debate in the stale Federal Parliament – I'm sorry to keep going on about them – but the debate has gone stale. What you are talking about is an enormous capacity for change, by changing the culture, how it is expressed sometimes through media. That in fact, the community can move very fast. We saw it in the gay marriage debate, the community moved way ahead of politics, way ahead of any mechanism for achieving that change, the public was there long before politics was there.

In terms of changing the culture and changing it fast and not getting bogged down in the shouty debates we talked about at the beginning, how important is a reimagining of the family structure?

ELIZABETH BRODERICK:
The family structure? I think it is just so very important. And at the minute, you know in many families, there are these deep, traditional gender roles. Even Michael and I were talking about even so much as the sharing of unpaid work. I mean, we know here in Australia, that that really has not shifted for many years. The lion's share of unpaid work will be done by women.

I always say as a sex discrimination commissioner, if I could have done one thing to promote gender equality, it would have been the better sharing of paid and unpaid work between men and women.

SARAH FERGUSON:
Why is it proving to be such a recalcitrant problem?

ELIZABETH BRODERICK:
I think it comes back to gender stereotyping, which I would say is outdated but is still obviously a pervasive current view that there is still certain work that is women's work and certain work that is men's work.

And definitely one of the prevailing social norms that we have in this nation is that of caring for children. What we call the 'ideal mother': so the ideal mother is someone who is always with her children. Now, she can be abusing, drinking, gambling, smoking, it doesn't really matter, if she is with her children that is what a good mother looks like. And we know it is way more complex than that.

So I think we need to break down some of the stereotypes and we need to recognise that sharing of paid and unpaid work, that is what creates resilient and robust and protective families. Indeed, even just thinking of 10 years ago when I was on my listening tour all around Australia talking to as many different types of families as I could, I think the families that had it best were lesbian mothers. Each of them were sharing both work and care in a very equal way. And you know, the kids had access to two parents who both worked and cared.

There was a lot that we can take from all different types of families, but at the heart of it there must be equality. Because without women's equality in the family, how can I leave an abusive relationship? How can I stay safe?

SARAH FERGUSON:
Michael, let me just ask you about that, and if I can in a slightly personal way, did you understand all this before you had a big family with lots of children, and all those experiences, had you already got it miraculously? Or was it the family that enabled you to understand this the way you do now?

DR MICHAEL SPENCE:
So… My mother always worked outside our home. And was very successful in her career. Though I suppose the notion that women should work outside the home, or might work outside the home, was not something that was foreign to me.

But I think, for me, if I may speak very personally, for me, though I have a Christian faith and there is a passage in Paul where he says, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." And I think the husband and wife, or two partners of whatever kind, in a healthy relationship, they are always submitting to one another. And that means saying, in the work area we have this set of jobs at home and we have these career aspirations, whatever they might be. And I wouldn't want to say that a woman or a man can’t decide to take time off paid employment to spend time working in their home, but we have this set of tasks and aspirations and we have got

to think about how to make it fair for the benefit of our flourishing. Because that is what is going to help our children to flourish too.

And so, for me, it is about respect and fairness. That said, I agree with Liz. You know, I used to iron my shirt each day before I went to work. Now in my current job, I have them done, I send them to a laundry, which is a terrible thing and a true confession. But if ever we had a female visitor, oh! You got points for laundry. Washing: not many men do the washing machine washing. Men tend to cook, which is slightly more glamorous.

And I have to say I have an old-fashioned prejudice against my wife taking out the garbage, which I need to be a bit more 'New Man' about. My wife is about 3-foot-tall, and the garbage bin is as tall as her. I think that there are definitely those gender stereotypes that we need to challenge, but I don't think you need to be radical about this. I think you just have to commit to our old-fashioned values of being fair in the family.

SARAH FERGUSON:
We're going to get to questions quite soon, and I think Michael has put you all on notice that particularly the women in the room need to make really bold and dramatic entree into the evening at that point. But I am a little short of time, and I just want to talk about the workplace for a minute, and I'm going to be personal too.

Because one of the things I got completely wrong when I was working was that I brought up children while working in a highly competitive environment. So Liz in her early career started talking about flexible working arrangements long before those words had became popular or fashionable. In my own working life, I failed.

What I chose to do was not to talk about the fact that I was trying to bring up small children while doing an extremely difficult and competitive job that involved a great deal of travel. I decided that it was not for me to talk about the fact I had children, that I would leave it aside and get on with my work and not talk about the fact that I needed my work to adapt to me. I made my family adapt to my work. It is only now looking back that I understand that I failed to see what you saw so early on, which is the reverse, that it is the work has to change.

So how fundamentally and how quickly do we need to change the flexibility of contemporary working arrangements in Australia to arrive at this gender-equal place where we all put the bins out, we all work when we want to work? We share the roles Michael is talking about, and the bigger roles of caring for families and children and older people as well, how important is flexible working arrangements and how radical in that space do we need to be?

DR MICHAEL SPENCE:
Well I just think these two things go together. And I think that is where we have got to invite men into the conversation. One of the reasons early feminist writers had trouble talking about child care, for example, is either because you had to involve men, or you had to involve collectivization, or you involve depressing other women in nanny roles.

But you we have got to talk about flexible work at home, and we have got to break down what so many feminist writers have recognised as the oppressive barrier between the public and the private. But it is hard, it is hard for men and for women.

You know I did one of those 360° leadership shadow things.

SARAH FERGUSON:
I hope you did better than Michelle Guthrie did in her one for the ABC, which famously became public.

DR MICHAEL SPENCE:
This wasn't a performance review, this was a leadership shadow one about gender. And as a man, you have to be a bit careful about talking about your children and your family because women can think that you, kind of, are patronising them or talking to them about your family because they are a woman. And in fact, someone said, a woman in this thing said, "It's a barrier in my relationship with him that he talks about his children so much."

My problem is I have got eight children and a busy job. So I don't go hiking, I don't watch movies, I don't go to fancy restaurants. All I do is children or work, so I have nothing else to talk about except work. *(Laughs)* And that is the thing where we have got to shift it for everybody, boys and girls, men and women, and whatever other genders you care to name, and we have got to make it OK to talk about your whole self at work, too, both for men and women so that if I say I have got to do school drop-off, half the room can't think, he is so full of himself, and half the room thinks, he is such a 'new man'.

And if you say you have got to do school drop-off, half the room don't think, what an empowered woman, and half the room don't think, she doesn't take her job seriously? We have to move beyond that and that is why guerrilla warfare in culture is so important.

ELIZABETH BRODERICK:
I agree, 100% with the idea that… Yes, they talk about the walk of shame, leaving to pick up your daughter or your son or whatever. I just think if you don't have an all roles flex policy in your organisation today, you're just not a contemporary workplace.

SARAH FERGUSON:
How many workplaces in Australia have that, do you know?

ELIZABETH BRODERICK:
I think it is emerging as a norm. Now it will be implemented to a greater or lesser extent. Just to let everyone know what all roles flex workplaces is: this is where I don't have to request a flexible work arrangement. The fact is flexibility is a given. The role of the supervisor is to work out with me what level of flexibility can work in this particular role.

And in the command and control environments, even looking in the aviation industry, some industries are more difficult. But in knowledge-based industries, that shouldn't be that difficult to actually achieve.

And I think, how do you achieve that? Well you have it start at the leadership level. To be honest, the CEOs work long hours, but they are working where and when they choose to. So they have a level of flexibility and control that someone further down the chain does not have. So it's about delivering flexibility and control back to individuals, and also talking about what is

messy – all the things across your whole life, which brings me back to my 'more humanity less intellect' approach.

SARAH FERGUSON:
You mentioned earlier on, just at the beginning you talked about some of the lag in some industries. So the aviation industry you just mentioned, you mentioned the military and so on.

Now in the US, for example, the military became a huge mover for change in changing the cultural diversity in the American military. In part because of race problems in the American military in the '70s. Now that is a rigid organisation that used its hierarchy to force through really dramatic change in terms of diversity in the officer class. Can you imagine something like that here? That they would go to the lengths that the American military did to make cultural change in the organisation over a very short space. Do we have the capacity here to see that, not the built change, the slow cultural change that we can do, but at the organisational level?

ELIZABETH BRODERICK:
Look I think the Australian military are doing that. When I look at the data, I worked with the military from 2011 through to about 2015. During that time I saw the recruitment of women increase significantly. Just to give you an idea, I think today the army recruits, 20% of their recruits are female. When I went in, it was about 11%.

Air Force and Navy, I know they are shooting to get to 35 or 40% of those services to be women. And yes, we have not seen our first Chief of the Defence Force, or the first Chief of any of the services as female, but I am sure we will see a Deputy Chief and then onto a Chief very very shortly. Not only that, we are seeing women in every aspect so the whole military has now opened up for women. And that is something that is only recent.

I think the military, and because it is a hierarchical structure – which is often a bad thing – it is actually a good thing in these types of arrangements.

SARAH FERGUSON:
When will we see the first female Vice-Chancellor of Sydney University?

DR MICHAEL SPENCE:
It is a good question.

SARAH FERGUSON:
Who should I apply to for the answer?

DR MICHAEL SPENCE:
Perhaps the female Chancellor, and the last Chancellor was, of course, a female Chancellor as well. But at such a point as I have my… I hope we might find a female Vice-Chancellor.

SARAH FERGUSON:
I have say I did ask some friends who work at Sydney Uni, who of course shall remain nameless. I asked them what questions I should ask, and one of them said, "Shouldn't the Vice-Chancellor give up his position to a woman?" And I thought that's a bit tough.

DR MICHAEL SPENCE:
Just last year, someone stood up and said with a great degree of cynicism, I have to say – which was surprising because it wasn't a cynical person – "And we all know there will be some move towards gender equality in this University when we have a female Dean of Medicine," and what I knew which they didn't know was that we had already appointed a female Dean of Medicine and Health. And so change happens.

That's the thing, isn't it? I used to do feminist jurisprudence in Oxford and it was kind of interesting because you were always encouraging and discouraging the students. Some of them would say that change never happens, "It's all men, no matter how you think." You say, "Hang on, hang on, 100 years ago women could not vote, and married women couldn't have property." Until something like the 1970s, if you got married and you were a woman at the University of Sydney, you had to resign. That is within my lifetime: you had to resign your job because you were a woman and you got married. The change has been enormous. And other students would say, "Yeah, there's no big deal now, it is all talent whether you are men or women." And men or women would say this, and you would think, no, that's not true. Look at the statistics. Think about the enormous way we have to go in culture. And I think that is the point, it is about always being in the way that I know Liz is, sort of a glass half full and half empty at the same time.

ELIZABETH BRODERICK:
I categorise it as living between despair and hope. We have to make a life somewhere in between. That's where we're up for, Michael.

SARAH FERGUSON:
That is where we are up to. Does anyone have any questions in that dark morass of people we can't see ery clearly? Here you all are: lights on. Is there a microphone, who has got some questions? There you go, someone is waving over there. And you know the usual drill, we will take it as a comment if it is long and rambly. I'm sure it's going to be excellent.

COMMENT FROM FLOOR:
Oh I haven't even started… *(Laughs)* Thank you, I just wanted to thank both of our presenters today. As alumni of Sydney University, I'm astonished at the commitment and the passion that you have displayed. But I do want to talk about one thing, one of the questions I think may have caused some pause and it is always the question of how: how you do it, how you change the culture.

As a former HR director, I would like to give you some analogies. And I will probably start with Rudy Giuliani and crime in New York in the '80s. Where he started talking about stopping jaywalking and suddenly the murder rate drops. I was also in charge of safety, rather than looking at someone dying in the workplace you look at water on the floor. You look at where the wires are exposed. You have to start small, you have to have a zero-tolerance approach because this is an elephant problem, you have to eat it one step at the time.

SARAH FERGUSON:
How do you formulate that into a question for the VC?

SPEAKER:
OK, in terms of every comment that could be construed as sexist or putdown-able, someone,

generally the chair of a meeting, needs to step on that. Because people are not chairing meetings appropriately.

SARAH FERGUSON:
Can I turn that into a question? So how important is it to have a really strong bystander culture, as well running meetings: running meetings and a strong bystander culture?

DR MICHAEL SPENCE:
So I just agree, a strong bystander culture is huge. We have worked consciously on the bystander issue, particularly – but not only also with staff more generally – but particularly in the area of sexual harassment amongst students.

We have realised and done work on empowering other students to say that it is just not on. And as you say, not at the point at which somebody is behaving inappropriately, but at the point at which they are saying things that are inappropriate.

And interestingly: that is the approach that St Paul's College, which has not traditionally been a bastion of women's rights, is now taking in relation to the sexual assault and sexual harassment stuff. They have said, all of that, of course, "We put all that stuff in place but we're really going to come down hard on sexism because if we do that, it makes the other more inconceivable." And that is really beginning to pay off, I have to say, quite quickly.

ELIZABETH BRODERICK:
Just adding onto that: I couldn't agree more. Everyday sexism, stamping that out. Because if you look at sexual harassment, it happens on a continuum. At this end we have got demeaning behaviours and attitudes about women, right through to full on sexual harassment and sexual assault, really, at this end of the continuum.

I think what we saw from St Paul's College, I had a very good look at St Paul's College as many of you know, is the importance of strong leadership. Not just from a college head, but strong leadership in the student cohort as well. And what we saw there is a real intention and desire now to cut it off here rather than let it run on.

SARAH FERGUSON:
Thank you. This gentleman here at the front, if you could zoom the microphone on down there. I think someone who moves to the front deserves to get a question because that was a good move at the beginning of the evening.

QUESTION FROM FLOOR:
First of all, thank you for the evening, it has been informative. Most of our influencers are the powerful Male Champions. When you look at it in the media or in Parliament, they almost invariably have attended elite private schools. So the strong sense of these people progressing – that is on both sides of politics, Labor and Liberal – most tend to have gone to private school and indeed send their kids to private schools. When you talked about St Paul's, for example, these are kids who have probably gone to elite private schools, so where these problems manifested, I am wondering, where do we start? Do we start at this level or do we start where these kids at these elite private schools had some sort of intervention to look at changing,

perhaps, as part of the pedagogy, as part of the course curriculum, changing the nature of conversations that you are referring to.

So that we break down these attitudes, these stereotypes, that manifest themselves years later when they get to university and beyond, once they go into these powerful positions where they can in fact make change.

SARAH FERGUSON:
How do you do that? Is it pedagogy, early intervention?

ELIZABETH BRODERICK:
I would even say go earlier: go to the family for the start, because that is where our attitudes are formed. I mean, what expectations do we have for our sons and our daughters? What behaviour are we modelling as parents? Either of opposite sex or same-sex relationships. I think, the family is so important. And then, as you say, going to the school.

If you look at countries doing well on gender equality, you're looking in Scandinavian nations, what are they doing? They are introducing gender equality from three years of age onwards. Even the picture books and whatever will have a female fire engine driver, the male carer – they will show men and women in a whole variety of different roles. And it will be built there, then it will be built into the schooling system. I'm not exactly sure what their private schooling system is like, but I absolutely take your point: is that it needs to be built more and more into the schooling system, because otherwise we are replicating male privilege, in a sense, and how it plays out later on.

SARAH FERGUSON:
Liz, can I just ask you about that: in terms of the Scandinavian model, I don't know the answer to this, but this is something that Peterson argues. That, in spite of all the change, the early pedagogy, the interventionist approach by government in terms of gender politics in those countries, that you still have the same breakdown of more male engineers, more female nurses, and he would say there is still 1 in 20, 1 in 20 on either side.

ELIZABETH BRODERICK:
I don't know whether it is that extreme. Interestingly where you have the most female software engineers and whatever is the least gender-equal countries: Saudi Arabia. India. A lot of different Southeast Asian.... They will have the highest number of women not just studying but working in those areas.

And we are trying to understand what that is about. One hypothesis that is put is that in those nations that gives a kind of safe and financially viable role for women to do that. Whereas in a nation like Australia, we tell women, "You can do anything, you can be anything". And in a sense, does that take them away from some of those?

SARAH FERGUSON:
So Michael, I noticed on your website there is an Economics student talking about the fact that you still get a drop-off rate in female Economics undergraduates, is that right? Females dropping out of Economics?

DR MICHAEL SPENCE:
I would have to take that question on notice. We do have a problem in particular disciplines in relation to representation. And interestingly, for example, it doesn't tend to be at the level of generality of engineering. It tends to be aeronautical engineering is bad, biomedical engineering is not.

We've got targets for faculties to get better representation where they can.

SARAH FERGUSON:
But as you both say, it is one thing to think you can do everything because most females go through education now and they are told that. I was certainly told it when I went to school, but if you don't understand what you are going to do when your life develops to those other places with family members to care for, if you haven't figured it out, it doesn't matter if you were told you can be an astronaut. You're not going to figure it out at that moment.

More questions. That young lady, yes, with her hands stretching up to the sky. That's you, looking behind, yes. I think if you stretch, you deserve to get a question. Where are you?

QUESTION FROM FLOOR:
Thank you so much for the talk, it has been amazing. I wanted to talk a little bit about what you were saying of this whole we're told we can do anything, and we are told there isn't really all these gender problems that historically there were.

For example, sexual assault in the workplace. And I just wonder how that is something we can address with young women where we are able to tell them what those dangers are without being told, "Oh no, you're fine, everything is fine, it is the 21st century and these problems don't exist."

SARAH FERGUSON:
How do we deal with the gap between the ideal that we think should exist – and that some people this exists – and the reality for lots of women?

ELIZABETH BRODERICK:
I know, to be safe at work is a basic human right. It is a sad conversation, I had it with my own daughter about the realities of working life. She started at a fast food organisation and really within the first week she had been, what I would say technically under the Act, sexually harassed. Indeed, I ran a focus group for young women in South Australia – I remember very early on in my term as Sex Discrimination Commissioner – and of those 14 women, at least two thirds had been sexually harassed in either their first or second job.

And I still remember, it was one young woman turned to me and said, "Liz, I know if my uncle does it it's not OK, but maybe if it is my boss or manager, maybe that's just the way work is? And I have to get used to it." And I just thought, what a poor reflection on the workplace in Australia.

So where we're at today is one in four women has been sexually harassed in the workplace in the last five years. And what we know is that it is actually employers and the bystander, which we talked about before, it is bystander intervention, it is the leader of the organisation having an

absolutely zero-tolerance and going out and speaking about it. It is actually about making sure the reporting system is in place. And actually it is women coming together with each other.

I remember my own experience of sexual harassment and I started to tell that story several years ago. But how I managed through that was when good young women, my friends, came and supported me because it was a job I loved, and it had gone from a job I loved to a job I was fearful to go into. And it was that group of young women that helped me manage through it.

But I think that if everyone commits to us, if we did one thing, that it would be to create an environment where women can thrive equally and that means a safe environment. Every one of us can play a part in that.

DR MICHAEL SPENCE:
The question was also about how you help people navigate the realities of the current situation. And I think there are two things: one is institutions really have a duty to make sure that they respond very quickly and very well when it happens. We didn't have great processes for that and we have put a lot of work into that over the last five years. But I think that people have got to know that, if it happens, they can have the issue dealt with quickly and fairly.

And the second thing, and this is much trickier on a University campus. But without any – any: not at all, no, never – hint of victim blaming, we also have to teach young people how to look after themselves. Men and women.

We know, for example, that sexual assault and harassment rates on campus of LGBTIQ community is very high. And we also have to equip young people, without victim blaming, to think about how to look after themselves. And that's very hard.

Third, we have to begin conversations, without excessive moralizing, about respectful relationships as part of the education process. Because let's face it: if you get to a point at which is there consent or is there not consent, you have kind of lost the plot. It is really, is this, what does a respectful relationship at work look like, what does a respectful romantic relationship look like? We have to have those conversations.

And what's interesting for an educational institution is getting the first bit right, the responding. In a sense, though that took far longer than it should have, that is the easy bit. The thinking about how young men and women protect themselves without looking like you are victim blaming, that is really hard, because at the moment, it is almost impossible to talk about that. And also thinking about what respectful relationship conversations look like is much harder as a conversation for an institution like ours than simply a conversation about consent.

SARAH FERGUSON:
How did we arrive at the point where conversations are all but impossible to have as you just described?

DR MICHAEL SPENCE:
I think on the second one, it is because there has been so much victim blaming. There has just been so much victim blaming that you want as an institution to be able to say, "Look, if you are going to drink a lot of alcohol, you need to go with someone in your group who is not." And you

know, to give people basic safety rules without looking like you're saying that if you are assaulted and you have something to drink, it's your fault. Because clearly it is not.

I think because there has been so much victim blaming, that conversation is hard. And in the respectful relationship space, I think it is because we actually have real trouble having normative conversations at the moment across the community because we can't disagree well. And the question about what constitutes a respectful relationship is actually a much more morally complex one than a simple question of, "Did they say yes or no?"

SARAH FERGUSON:
The lady in green and then, I think that is the last one. I know, don't you want to stay longer?

QUESTION FROM FLOOR:
Hi, ok. So I consider myself to be a feminist and my partner has become a big fan of Jordan Peterson. We have been discussing this for a while. He has internalised the idea that gender inequality in the workplace is not because of historical and systematic discrimination, but rather because women don't necessarily want to be there, maybe they don't want to join the rat race or they want to have a more balanced life.

So if you don't agree that there is a problem, then you don't agree there is something that needs to be fixed, and therefore quotas and targets seem unfair. My question is, how do you respond to that? And how do you do that in a respectful way where you fundamentally disagree?

SARAH FERGUSON:
That is a truly excellent question, and all the more so within the confines of a relationship, hard to do. How do you talk to someone who does not accept that the problem is there?

DR MICHAEL SPENCE:
(Laughs) So, I think the interesting point you touched on is the whole issue of whether women want to have a more balanced life and all the rest of it.

Well, I know plenty of women who don't want a balanced life, but I also know plenty of men who do. And one of the funny things, well, not one of the funny things, but one of the things about having lots of kids, for example, is you are always wondering whether or not you are doing a good enough job at home and whether or not you are doing a good enough job at work. You are always balancing those things, whether you are a woman or a man, I think.

And so, I would say, "Look, if this relationship is going to continue…"

ELIZABETH BRODERICK:
A bit of marriage counselling!

DR MICHAEL SPENCE:
"...If this relationship is going to continue, don't you want us to make the kind of home where you could have a more flexibility, and a bit more work life balance? And if we were to ever make the decision to have children, to then spend more time with them, wouldn't you think that would be a funner way of living?"

Because I think for many young men, at the moment, my intuition talking to them – and I talk to a lot of them about this issue – they feel a bit trapped because they feel like women are getting to have the public sphere and the private sphere. And they won't get to have the public sphere and they will continue to be excluded from the private sphere.

And I think that is because it will never be quite kosher for them to say, for example, take a career break and look after their children. And so, I think there is genuine fear there. And so, for the disciples of Jordan Peterson, I think the question is: wouldn't life just be more fun if we could, all of us, have more balanced lives? If we could have the opportunity both to pursue opportunities outside the home and also do as good a job as we can in the home. And wouldn't that be better for men as well as women?

ELIZABETH BRODERICK:
See, Michael goes to work for a rest. I'd be with him I'd go to work for a rest as well.

DR MICHAEL SPENCE:
We don't get a lot of rest at home. We have a three-year-old, a two-year-old and a four-month-old and we all sleep in one room. It goes, the baby, my wife, the three-year-old, the two-year-old and me. So work is very restful. *(Laughter)*

ELIZABETH BRODERICK:
But I totally agree with that. I think the thing about Jordan Peterson is he puts it down to women's individual choices. And that's where I think it is problematic. I mean, I would be saying to your partner: look, the fact is there are a lot of men who also don't want to be the CEO, who don't want to develop strong careers. But that doesn't mean we're not seeing men actually lead nearly every organisation in this nation.

So the fact that there are some women who choose also not to build strong careers, that's fine. But there is a lot of women who want to, and where are they? So I just think it is a flawed argument and it is an easy argument to make because we're generalising across a whole cohort, which is every woman, to say every woman doesn't want to be in paid work and that's why we don't see women in paid work. And I would just say, "That is rubbish."

SARAH FERGUSON:
But the Vice-Chancellor made a good point, too, that you don't want anyone to feel they are being excluded from anything. It is an excellent question, and an excellent place for us to wrap up.

I would like to thank Liz and Michael for everything they brought to the conversation. I know we could keep listening to them for a very long time. I like the idea that hypocrisy is a good thing.

DR MICHAEL SPENCE:
There is a whole philosophical movement about it, and it is kind of true. Have you noticed that since people have been able to say, recently, outrageous, sexist and racist things in a way that was not possible 10 years ago, the whole conversation is shifting to the icky? There is a point in good manners.

SARAH FERGUSON:
There is a point. He also talked eloquently about vulnerability which I think was an excellent thing to hear from someone in Michael Spence's position. If any of you are students here at the University, I think that, particularly, is a precious thing to hear from someone with the power that Michael technically wields.

And to Liz, thank you for everything you brought to the conversation. All your observations from the international sphere, and that extraordinary combination of seeing and picturing for us a new world that we could inhabit and that we could get to quite fast. We can get to that gender-equal world if we all do it ourselves and don't wait for legislation to make it happen. We need legislation, we need the laws, but we need each of us, energetic and a warrior, as Yvonne said earlier, to make it happen.

DR MICHAEL SPENCE:
The terrific thing about Liz, is she is interested in the opinions of rank amateurs like me. Even though she knows what she's talking about!

SARAH FERGUSON:
We wish Michael a happy journey tomorrow. Thank you all for coming out, I hope you have enjoyed it. We have!

(Applause)