

**The Hon. Joe Hockey MP**  
**Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations**

EOWA Business Achievement Awards – keynote speech  
Wednesday, 21 November at 12.00 pm (on stage at 12.30 pm)  
Doltone House, Piers 19 - 21 Jones Bay Wharf, Pirrama Road, Pyrmont Point

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To all of the distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Well, congratulations to everyone here, who in many ways has contributed not just to the breaking down of traditional barriers, but importantly has contributed to the - significantly to the growth of the companies and organisations that you work for.

I could stand here and talk to you about various legislative initiatives coming out of Canberra that would help to address the ongoing imbalance - the gender imbalance in the workplace. I could talk to you about attitudes and statistics. I am very proud of the fact that as Minister for Employment I am now responsible for a part of the economy that employs more women than at any other time in Australia's history. I'm also very proud of the fact that there are more women in senior positions than at any other time in Australian history.

But I also recognise there is a very, very long way to go. A very long way to go. And having the right legislative framework is part of the equation; one of the reasons why we've extended parental leave, one of the reasons why we introduced the baby bonus; one of the reasons why we've introduced, or promised to introduce, grandparents leave.

But, significantly, it comes down to individual enterprises. A few weeks ago I went to an open cut mine at Kalgoorlie in Western Australia and I met two working mums. They didn't have traditional occupations; they were both shift-sharing and job-sharing, driving 340 ton trucks up and down the open cut mine. And when I said to the head mechanic, isn't it great to have some women in the workplace, he said mate they take much better care of the trucks than the men.

And when I asked the head of the mine what the benefit was of having a diverse workforce, he said the women offer greater stability in the workplace, he said they're hungrier for the work; he said, importantly, people learn from the stability they provide and, significantly, they've set up a childcare centre at the mine. And these two women earn \$75,000 a year, each, for a six hour shift, sharing a twelve hour shift.

The empowerment of those women, but particularly the improvement in the commercial returns for the business, sends a very clear message; if you are an employer and you do not have a diverse workforce, that somehow excludes 50 per cent of the population, you are a mug. It's as simple as that.

You cannot be competitive in the modern age using new technology and using all the resources of the Earth if you are somehow excluding 50 per cent of the population, or only including 20 per cent of the 50 per cent of the population. Employers have to have the right attitude and that's why I'm particularly proud of the work that Anna has done and - and the great work undertaken by the department. But also, significantly, the involvement of business.

I know exactly how challenging it can be. I have a wife that runs foreign exchange for a very big bank. We have two children under two and a half. No matter what I do, no matter where I am, I feel a sense of guilt that I'm never participating enough in the upbringing of our children.

And no matter how busy my wife is, no matter how much more she earns than me [laughter], as she occasionally reminds me - or that she has a real job, compared to my job which isn't a real job - no matter what the case the children still turn to her as the parent. And that's the challenge. And I've got to admit that my attitude to all of this has changed since I've become a parent. And it's a good lesson; it's a great lesson.

But somehow, I want to make it better for others - recognise that you have to have flexibility in the workplace. My wife has a very accommodating employer, but it remains a challenge; you still have to achieve the results. And obviously, at the end of the day, if you're well remunerated the chief accountant will always say you've got to have a return on investment. But employers need to have the right attitude, employees need to have the right attitude and the Government has to have the right attitude.

So to all of you who have achieved great success, thank you very much. I particularly applaud the women who are the mentors in the room. Mentoring is vitally important for everyone. It is - it is not a replacement for good legislation, but it is vitally important for leadership.

And I particularly want to pay tribute to Ita Buttrose who I've known for a period of time. And Ita is, in very many ways, a mentor to many women. She challenged the orthodoxy of the treatment of women in the journalistic profession over many years. And Ita is one of those people I greatly admire as being a ground-breaker when it comes to the equal treatment of women in the workplace.

So, thank you everyone for coming along. Congratulations to everyone for their great success. Thank you to the employers for supporting this initiative and, importantly, for being a part of today's event. And to all of you, I wish you the very best for the future. We've still got a long way to go, but common sense and commercial value says that great strides will be made over the next few years.

Thanks very much.