

Event: SAGE Celebration and Next Steps 2018

Date: Thursday 8 March 2018

Arrival time: 10:55am

VC Speaking time: 11:05am-11:10am

Location: SPS136/137

Speech notes

Vice-Chancellor Professor Linda Kristjanson AO



[Introduced by Marcia Gough]

Thank you Marcia

Acknowledgement of country

I would like to also respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we gather, and pay respects to all Aboriginal Community Elders, past and present, who have resided in the area and have been an integral part of the history of this region.

It is wonderful to be here together, celebrating the SAGE submission and the next phase of action for Swinburne.

I would like to take a moment to state just how important gender equity is for Swinburne, for our community, and for us all.

At Swinburne, we work hard to create a culture that encourages and supports flexibility and equal opportunities for all. To be a leader in diversity and inclusion for our staff and students.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan was awarded Elevate status – the first university in Australia to be awarded so – in recognition of our work with Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander culture and equity.

We have been recognised for nine years in a row as an Employer of Choice for Gender Equality by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency.

Gender equity is a crucial aspect of our diversity and inclusion culture. Equity is about fairness and opportunity for all. Equality is about treating everyone the same. We strive for both, as we cannot have one without the other.

To be equal, we must first address systemic challenges and barriers to advancing this cause across all disciplines.

To be a world-class university creating social and economic impact, all members of our community must be represented fairly, openly and equitably.

We need to face these challenges head-on to achieve our vision. And that's where the SAGE program comes to the fore.

It brings several of our existing gender equity programs and newer initiatives together. It helps us to identify and address our gaps. Through it we have already seen a range of initiatives to enhance gender equity and diversity including:

- Our prestigious Women in STEM Fellowship program, which has awarded three-year fellowships to four women since its introduction in 2016
- An on-campus school holiday program for Swinburne parents – staff and students – of school-aged children
- Parents feeding rooms and gender neutral bathrooms, and
- Policy improvements to enhance gender neutrality.

For women in academia, the SAGE program has provided mentorship and leadership activities to support career development and promotion. It has assisted other teams to provide grants for carers to support and re-establish their academic research careers.

And this is just the beginning.

I am delighted that we are joined today by our leaders in gender equity who have truly been instrumental in bringing our SAGE submission and action plan together, Professor Sarah Maddison and Dr Andrew Smith.

The SAGE pilot delivered us a four year plan to create lasting change. Change that we are all responsible for.

There were over 70 hours of working groups, workshops, forums, data analysis, and other activities involved. All with the aim to help us write the strongest submission... the strongest action plan... to inform, engage and address gender equity issues at Swinburne.

This is no small feat and I am excited to hear Sarah speak about these findings and main actions shortly.

Our actions and initiatives, from the smallest gesture to the broadest program, all contribute to a workplace that provides fair and equal opportunities for staff and for students, no matter their background or gender.

I also want to recognise the efforts of those of you here today who have contributed to improving gender equity at Swinburne.

As I reflected on International Women's Day this year, it takes a few adopters, the early innovators, to get to critical mass. Together, we can have influence and together we can create change.

While you are listening to our guest speakers today, I encourage you to reflect on your role and what you can do to help achieve gender equity. We all play a part.

[END]