

ESF IMPACT

newsletter

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BREAKING THE BIAS IWD 2022



ESF hosted an event for International Women's Day 2022 that brought together 300 people representing the 14 agencies that make up the emergency service/management sector in Victoria. The theme for 2022 was *Break the Bias*.

Dr Niki Vincent who was appointed Victoria's first Public Sector Gender Equality Commissioner in September 2020, asked the gathering how they are contributing to equality saying that systemic change, requires all of us, as individuals, to live this value to break the bias.

She used the example of merit which has long been used to justify the gender gap in leadership even though we know merit is a social construct – and that merit often means appointing someone to a role based on a stereotype of what people in that role have previously looked like.

Dr Vincent acknowledged that talking about gender equality can be hard - especially, for men, who feel like they'll be painted as the bad guys, but gender equality is not about men vs women, or a women's issue. It's about a better system.

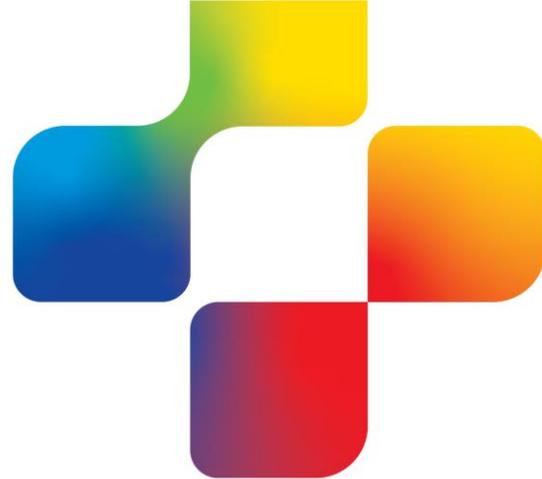
She urged men to be both brave and vulnerable in talking about gender equality just like organisations need to be brave in facing the forthcoming gender audit results.

Last December, some 300 public sector organisations submitted their workplace gender audit data to the Commission. Audits reported against 7 key indicators, including workforce composition at all levels, pay gap, sexual harassment, and gendered segregation.

She said, "Audits may not sound exciting, but it's akin to donning breathing apparatus and preparing for action. But instead of entering a burning building, the brave act is sitting at the table with the discomfort of data leaders can't hide behind."

Dr Vincent said, "This will provide the greatest transparency we've ever had on gender equality in the public sector and consequently the greatest accountability." Audit findings are expected to be released in June.

The gathering ended the day on an unexpected high note singing about how we can break the bias together!



REACTIONS

I loved being at the event and being part of this fantastic sector of women and men celebrating International Women's Day. It was an empowering day on so many levels and so lovely to mix and mingle with such fabulous people. I learned a lot from each speaker and even about myself through the discussion. Just the atmosphere of support alone is enough to kick start you into action – including the ton of great advice on how we can all break the bias!

Julie Carter, VicPol

The event was a great opportunity to hear from some amazing women and listen to some honest and thought-provoking discussions. The challenge for all of us is take what we have heard and turn that into actions and collectively work to break the bias.

Peter Brick, DELWP



[Session recordings, photo folio, event highlights and music video are available here.](#)