

ESF IMPACT

newsletter

ISSUE 39, 8 March 2023



Embrace Equity

The Emergency Services Foundation (ESF) brought together 190 people from across the emergency management sector to celebrate International Women's Day with support from WorkSafe Victoria. The program addressed the 2023 IWD theme *embrace equity* which aimed to drive worldwide understanding why equal opportunities aren't enough. The day began by making the distinction between equality and equity. Equality is about fairness, or making sure everyone has the same access to resources and opportunities. Equity is about tailoring resources and opportunities needed to reach and equal outcome. The example of giving everyone the same bike was used. Not everyone can ride that bike unless it suits their individual differences.

Caroline Kell, a Mbarbrum woman, delivered the keynote address which raised awareness about Aboriginal history and identity, and its legacy for achieving goals of diversity and inclusion. She encouraged the sector to provide spaces where people can show up and be who they really are.

WorkSafe representatives spoke about the many forms of workplace gender violence experienced in workplaces and how it impacts psychological safety and Kellie Shewring CEO at Victorian Council of Churches Emergency Ministry led a discussion with a lively panel about whether women lead differently and is this helpful for the sector. The panel agreed authentic leadership regardless of gender is most important.

Gender Equality Commissioner Dr Niki Vincent shared some alarming statistics about the gender pay gap in the sector and the need to tackle obstacles to change, such as, unconscious bias, and personal self-doubts that contribute to a 'confidence gap' which prevents women from taking up job and promotion opportunities. Women shared stories with their male sponsors about how men had supported their careers, and this demonstrated so well how men are a fundamental in driving equity.

The last session focused on a more diverse future in emergency management with intersectionality and voices from other diversities recognised, including perspectives from the trans community, people living with disability, older people, youth and women of colour. This was followed by a reflection about the need for different forms of self-care.

By celebrating women's achievements, raising awareness about discrimination, and encouraging people to act, ESFs IWD event is critical for building momentum in the sector to drive gender and social parity.



RESPONSES

It has been a great gathering of minds to get insights into the challenges men and women face to achieve equity in the sector today.

Paul James, President Life Saving Victoria /Area Manager Ambulance Victoria

It was wonderful to feel the energy in the room and hear stories of people wanting to improve.

Natalie MacDonald, CEO Country Fire Authority.

There is great value in sharing experiences about diversity and inclusion across the emergency management sector.

Superintendent Paul Bertoncello, VicPol

The day has reenergised me to question and challenge the advances we have made in this sector.

Kate Fitzgerald, CEO EMV

I was particularly impressed with the opportunity to listen to some broader and more diverse voices!

Andrew Crisp, Emergency Management Commissioner

A graphic recording of the day can be [viewed here.](#)