



ANNA BURNS

Hi and welcome. I'm Anna Burns, the public programs manager of Sydney ideas. Today I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge the lands on which were hosting this virtual event. We're broadcasting from the Gadigal people of the Eora nation land.

We also want to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the various lands upon which you are working today and sitting and listening and joining in.

And the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are joining us for this event; we pay respects to elder's past present and celebrate the diversity of emerging Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of New South Wales.

We have a powerhouse collection of women here today, to reflect on where we're at, for the future of women and work. And thinking about feminism and what has COVID-19 done to change the landscape and game for everyone.

Much has changed in the world for women, yet also, it hasn't. Gender inequality is all the more highlighted and heightened by the current pandemic. So let's do a quick check in on the particular point of time that we find ourselves in.

In April, we saw 600,000 people become an employed due to COVID-19 and the unemployment rate went to 1.5 million in a month. And it will go higher in September when JobKeeper ends.

Last week's figures show unemployment rate at 7.4%; the worst in 19 years. McKinsey released a report last week saying that women's jobs are 1.8 times more vulnerable than men's jobs and that women make up 54% of overall job losses globally.

This means women's employment is dropping faster than average, even accounting for the fact that men and women work in different sectors.

Women are more likely to pick up unpaid labour. They feel the greater weight of caring responsibilities and childcare; and women over 55 make up the greatest cohort of homelessness here in Australia.

As youth employment grows so the challenges for young women. But it's not all doom and gloom. At the same time, women are more educated than ever and have wider access to platforms to be voices for change.

Since the earliest waves of feminism, the movement has evolved, with more attention; there's more intersectionality and there's more focus on breaking down silos.

So before COVID-19 hit, we were already experiencing unprecedented technological change in how and what we did for work. We're seeing a significant demographic change, we're seeing accelerated globalisation and the impacts of climate change.



TRANSCRIPT

Sydney Ideas podcast

What will the future of women's work look like?

Friday 24 July 2020

It's a lot to digest. As the discussion starts to shift towards recovery we hope, here in Australia, today we're considering how we ensure that women aren't let down, left out and not left behind. And as I said, we have a powerhouse panel of women here with us today.

We have Elizabeth Broderick, a lawyer and advocate for gender equality. Elizabeth has been a driver across anti-discrimination. She was the longest serving Sex Discrimination, Commissioner, and has worked tirelessly to break down structural and social barriers, faced by women and men and to promote gender equality.

We have Professor Rae Cooper from the University of Sydney Business School.

Rae is a professor of gender, work and employment relations; and she's based in the discipline of work and organisational studies. She's also a co-director of the Women, Work and Leadership research group and editor of the Journal of Industrial Relations.

Also here today is Harinder Sidhu from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Harinder is Deputy Secretary at DFAT and has just recently returned from a post as Australia's High Commissioner to India and the ambassador to the Kingdom of Bhutan.

And also Mariam Mohammed co-founder of MoneyGirl. Mariam Mohammed was born in Pakistan and currently lives in Dharug country and she is a community developer. She focuses on rallying people behind goals and the capacity to achieve those goals.

I'd also like to acknowledge and apologise that the Deputy Vice Chancellor of Indigenous Strategy and Services, Professor Lisa Jackson Pulver, was meant to be joining us today and is unable to and she sends her apologies for that.

So where are we at? It's been quite a journey, the last couple of months. And we're all in this together. But we're not all having the same experiences.

So let's kind of take check of where it's at. The gloom, the real, the positive. And I'll start with you, Rae current research insights. What's the landscape looking like?

RAE COOPER

Thanks Anna. I'm here today on Gadigal land as well. So I'd also like to acknowledge elders past present and emerging and note, as we do at Sydney Uni, that the land was never ceded.

So, all of the research, including the research that we're doing in the women working leadership research group at the University of Sydney shows us that women walked into COVID a step behind male colleagues and male family members across a range of indicators; from pay to seniority to working in undervalued feminised professions; to taking a greater share of unpaid work at home.

However, many of us who are researching the world of work and I think in many areas beyond, have kind of looked at our research studies and somewhat ripped them apart and thought, what will we do next, because it has actually thrown a lot of our assumptions about the world in the air, I think, and I think we'll probably get to that later.



But I think one of the things that we're finding in the women, work and leadership research group is that women, even though we stepped in behind men before COVID, COVID has actually exacerbated some of the inequalities that were pre-existing.

I'll just touch really briefly on three of them. The first one is, and this is an interesting one I think, particularly in light of where we've come from in our Summer bushfires; where we had a very male dominated frontline and, you know, we had the heroes, who were the mostly men or not all men, but mostly men in yellow, sort of, fighting fires.

In this crisis, this is the first time I can remember where we've had women in the front line. We have our nurses. We have our early childhood educators, you know, we even have cleaners, we have our teachers, our retail workers and they're all very highly feminised occupations, sadly they're all highly undervalued occupations as well.

But they are the frontline who are trying to keep us working, keep us safe, you know, and that's a great thing that women are doing; stepping forward and doing that work.

But as I say, they're both exposing themselves to risk in terms of the virus, but they're also very undervalued, underpaid I think, relative to the enormous social benefit of the things that they offer us.

The second thing I'd say is that, and you touched on this Anna already, the McKinsey report showed us; all of the ABS data shows us, all of the government data, Hilda data, everyone's data says that women have been more profoundly affected in terms of job loss and hours lost.

And if we think practically about what that means. And that means more pay has been lost by women. And because we know that women stepped into COVID well behind men, being at best about 14 to 15% behind men in full time earnings; that's a real worry in terms of what take home pay is at the moment, but it's also a worry for longer term implications around retirement savings and whatnot.

Another issue. And there's been some interesting studies that have come out around this issue, which is about the unpaid work that's going on at home during COVID.

So women already did way more work in the home around childcare and care of others in the home, but also unpaid work around other things in the home.

So some interesting research that my colleagues Brendan Churchill and Lyn Craig at the University of Melbourne have shown that whilst women did double what men did before COVID, in fact it's doubled again during the period of COVID.

So sort of compounding inequalities in lots of ways. So I'm sorry to start with the depressing and the negative but it hasn't been a good time for women, and I think one of the things that's worrying me a lot at the moment is that looking at the recovery strategies that we're moving towards;

I'm not sure that those recovery strategies are necessarily informed by the fact that women are behind in COVID and that those inequalities have been continued and enhanced during the last few months.



ANNA BURNS

Yep. Great, thanks. Rae. Liz, do you want to dig into some of what Rae said there, but also thinking about the big changes that are happening right now, but also happening before with technology and thinking about how we have a more just transition.

ELIZABETH BRODERICK

Thanks very much. Anna, and it's wonderful to be here. And can I too acknowledge, I'm on the lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, and just pay my respects to elder's past present and emerging.

And it's wonderful to be with such a great panel and to have such a great audience. I know the Sydney Ideas audience is broad and also likes to think about these issues in depth. So it's great to be here with you all.

And the fact is, we are all in this together. But it's true that we're not all having the same experience. And I think when you look at women, not all women will experience on the pandemic to the same extent. Or indeed in the same way.

And what we know is that women experiencing multiple forms of discrimination, particularly discrimination based on their race, their ethnicity, their class or cast identity will be impacted to a much greater degree and I might just talk a little bit about the role of a working group and just how we're seeing this picture globally.

So I'm currently the chair of the working group on discrimination against women and girls, and in that role I'm an independent expert to the United Nations and one of the official mandates that I have is to write to leaders of nation states, bringing to their attention; human rights violations that are happening in their country.

And I think what we're seeing at the minute is, you know, a very gendered impact of the pandemic. The fact is, and I just want to give you one example here because it's probably easy to see it in the example.

Just an official communication that we were involved in recently relates to a country in Asia where, like many countries across the world, the vast majority of women will be employed in the informal sector.

And as a result of the lockdown in this particular country, a number of young women who were street vendors decided to become digital entrepreneurs, because it wasn't possible to sell the clothing that they were selling out in the public space.

So they started to take their clothing and model it on Facebook. Within a few days, the leader of that particular nation made a speech, claiming that women were damaging the country's morality.

That they were damaging the culture of the country, and indeed police officers were sent round to arrest these women they were made to read out confessions on Facebook and it all started really because they chose to move, although, in a sense, they were forced to move from selling their public wares into the digital environment.



TRANSCRIPT

Sydney Ideas podcast

What will the future of women's work look like?

Friday 24 July 2020

And as we would all say, you know, for women and young women who are often feeding their families; it's the very survival, which is so necessary.

So I think it's an example of gender discrimination that's emerging at this time that we might otherwise be thinking about; we might say well lockdowns and responses to the COVID-19 pandemic actually impact everyone equally. And the reality is that they don't.

So just coming on to what are the other trends that are affecting women, in the world of work, and these trends are continuing through COVID and will continue post-COVID. And they're really four trends. One is technological change and we might talk a bit about that later.

Demographic change; there I'm talking about the aging of the world's population, but also the youth bulge that we're seeing in African nations and also in the Pacific.

The other thing is the impact of accelerated globalisation and the fishing of workplaces - gig economy. And then finally, we're seeing a movement for many countries to more sustainable economies and that's having an impact for women as well.

So these issues are affecting women in the changing world of work and it's up to us to start to put women at the centre and transform and reimagine both work but also economy. It's gonna be great to talk about that later on.

ANNA BURNS

A huge amount to dig into there, which segues quite nicely into Harinder. Harinder you've got a couple of complementary perspectives here; you've got the working in Australia and being part of DFAT, and also, having come back from overseas - you've got that international and local perspective which segues nicely from Liz's points.

With those dual perspectives that you have, what's the update from your side?

HARINDER SIDHU

Thanks Anna and of course I should also acknowledge that I'm speaking from Ngunnawal land and I want to pay my respects to the elders past present and emerging from these lands as well. Thank you.

Um, yes, I have two hats. Now, it's very interesting for me, I returned to Australia, just as the COVID epidemic was hitting, pandemic was hitting. And as Foreign Affairs and Trade, I'm a senior officer, obviously, completely pivoted our work.

And so we've seen, like most organisations, a dramatic change in how we work. About 80% of us went on to flexible and remote working, which was, you know, we think is actually a good thing because before that something like about 73% on remote working were women.

But now you have women, men, all levels to the organisation, having this lived experience of flexible working. And I think that that's revolutionised how we think about work, and will be a sustained piece of work.



TRANSCRIPT

Sydney Ideas podcast

What will the future of women's work look like?

Friday 24 July 2020

This dovetails very nicely with the work that we've been doing since 2014 on women and leadership in our organisation; where we've been able to really focus on the fact that even though we're a department with about 57 to 60% women we only in 2014 had about 34% of them in senior leadership and only 27% of Heads of Mission where women.

We've taken those numbers up to 40% of senior leaders are now women and 43% of Heads of Mission are women in foreign affairs now. So that's actually a tremendous achievement.

But at the same time well, we had all these good things happening on flexible working, on people really galvanising to do the work to bring Australians home and to support Australians around the world.

We of course, had to care for the safety of our staff and bought quite a number of them home. Many voluntarily some we had to direct obviously.

But what we found was that most, there is probably a predominance of women who have chosen to come home to be with their families for very good reasons.

But we do need to be conscious that that has impacts, not just on people's personal lives, obviously, but also in their professional aspirations down the track.

But on the other hat that I wear, of course, is foreign affairs; helping people overseas and all those things that Liz talks about in our development program we see in spades in all the areas that we've been working in.

We've seen the effects really of economic pressure on hitting women very hard, in terms of their labour force participation, of course, India is one place I watch very closely.

It has one of the lowest female labour force participation rates in the world at 24% on par with Saudi Arabia. So, as elsewhere in the world. I think women are carrying a lot of the burden of that and are facing the effects.

They are the first to face the effects of the economic pressure. The first to lose their jobs; they have poor access to healthcare, poorer access to technology which limits their ability to do things in alternative ways.

The rise in gendered violence as a result of people being in lockdown and being without work, those kinds of things, we're starting to see hit a lot; and sometimes actually less nutrition as families have less to eat, women are often the last ones to eat,

So I think you know where we have felt we would have said six or eight months ago, we were on the road, and we were starting to make progress, both in our own organisation and internationally, one of the things that the COVID crisis has really shown us is just how precarious that progress has been.

ANNA BURNS

Precariousness is one of the big kind of defining themes for 2020 right, and even more kind of for women's experience beyond this year, of course. Mariam precariousness is a nice segue for you.



TRANSCRIPT

Sydney Ideas podcast

What will the future of women's work look like?

Friday 24 July 2020

Financial literacy is a real focus of your work. And when we're talking about all of these big themes that that everyone's sort of been unpacking for us is, you know, independence, work; financial literacy, you know, it all comes back to that.

So tell me a little bit. Tell us all a little bit about MoneyGirl and why and how you kind of decided to tackle that issue.

MARIAM MOHAMMED

Absolutely. So I am coming to you, as Anna mentioned, from Dharug country today and the why and how of MoneyGirl is to improve young women's financial literacy in Australia.

So they are equipped with the resources and confidence to make better financial decisions for their futures.

And the why is simple, like everyone before me has said; the issues we are going to talk about today have existed before COVID.

COVID is simply kind of highlighting and making those issues more apparent for us because it is a very gendered epidemic.

So before COVID even hit we knew that for an Australian woman, she would enter the workforce earning 14 to 15% less, like Rae said.

She would then take on most of the carer responsibilities for her family throughout her life; taking time out of her career which impacts their pay, impacts promotion opportunities and which means by the end of their careers women are retiring with almost half; so about \$250,000 less in their superannuation than their male counterparts in Australia right.

Now this was the case in normal Australia. And that is why I'm doing the work of financial literacy through MoneyGirl.

Now COVID exacerbates a lot of those issues like we were saying; women are over represented in the industries that have been the most hit; they are on the front lines, but also they are over represented in the industries that are being least supported and most impacted, which includes hospitality, which includes childcare.

Another issue with those industries, I'm sure we will go in later, is they have a very casualised workforce. They have an underpaid workforce.

So, those issues are being compounded; women are overrepresented in those industries, they have a casual workforce. They have an underpaid workforce and they are the least supported in the, what do you say, the responses that we are, the policies that we have rolled out, right?

Then on top of that, the hidden pandemic behind it all; women are trapped at home and home is not necessarily always the safest place for women.



TRANSCRIPT

Sydney Ideas podcast

What will the future of women's work look like?

Friday 24 July 2020

And so we've seen a rise in domestic violence, not just in Australia, but around the world. And that's the shadow pandemic that impacts women more than anyone else, right?

So then we have to consider that like Liz mentioned, there are some intersectionalities within these impacts. So women from certain classes, races and sexualities will be impacted more by the violence; by being caught at jobs.

Some people will be experiencing the impacts of this pandemic more than others, right. So those are the challenges that lie ahead for Australian women, and women around the world, but I do see an opportunity, especially for young women as we enter the workforce is this recession that has been brought on by the pandemic, is impacting women more than anybody else.

And so, for once, we are trying to bring women to the centre of this conversation and talking about how structures that are built into the economy do not favour women or actively work against women and that includes things like childcare right; how childcare prevents women from going back to work full time after they have had children.

So I do see an opportunity in this conversation shaping a better workplace that is genuinely inclusive of genders.

And another thing is the impact it has had on workplaces and how business is done has kind of clarified to everyone that what women have been saying about inclusive workplaces for a very long time is not just a feminist issue, it is an issue for everybody.

Now we are seeing today that like Rae was saying the workplace is becoming more diverse and how work is being done in the workplace is becoming more flexible with this work arrangements; with hours and all of those things because for once women haven't had to tell people that flexible work arrangements actually result in better outcomes.

It is staring people right in the face.

Because necessity is the is the mother of innovation, right, so we've had to resort to flexible work arrangements and stuff.

And we've realised that work can be done just as well from home. And so these ideas have become mainstream; like flexible work, working from home.

And I think that that does present an opportunity for us to have ride this wave while this conversation is mainstream and not just a conversation that women are starting and having; and solidify those policies into workplace cultures, so that we don't go back to the old normal which was not serving us so well.

ANNA BURNS

Yes. So what I want to get into now is the is the where and the how. You've all kind of teased out this idea that there have been some really challenging and very concerning things have unfolded in the last few months,



but there has also been a bit of optimism and a really massive shift in terms of as we've also said, the view of flexible working and what that can mean for women, there's an opportunity there.

It can also mean a whole lot of extra work as well. So how do we balance out a future that avoids sort of systemic disadvantage for a certain generation or a certain tier of workers.

And also how do we kind of be mindful of the pipeline, because there's a lot of, you know, you sort of said Harinder, about women coming back from overseas; there were more women coming back from overseas for the family and those concerns.

How do we find the right balance but yeah, million dollar question for anyone who wants to take it. How do we, get the best of this and move forward?

RAE COOPER

Might I start Anna? And so I think one thing I think we need to really reflect on is that something you hinted to at there, which is that we have a very highly educated, very capable young female labour force in Australia.

We've been doing some research in the Australian women's working futures project here at the University of Sydney, which is looking at what young women want, experience from work and also what they hope for and fear in the future.

Now keeping in mind that our under 45 workforce in Australia is among the most highly educated of the; our female young workers are among the most highly educated on the CDS primary workforces

So we actually have a real gift here amongst our labour force and yet and young women are actually much more qualified than young men are. And when we do research with them and talk to them about what they want to achieve in their careers and their future.

They don't have a sense that what they want to do is make that Sophie's Choice that many of the generations prior to them, have had to make, which is between you know, a great career on one hand and a family life, on the other.

What they expect to be able to do is to be able to combine both in a way that allows them to work in good jobs, not necessarily dead-end jobs.

So I think that's something that we have to keep in mind. I think it's also important to know that we have some gaps there already, in terms of what these young women are facing.

And when we ask them what they nominate as the most important thing in a future job for them. They talk about two key things, there's many issues - it's quite a complex picture, but the majority and so 81%, say two things.

One is employment security and we can see that that has been smashed apart as part of COVID, so that's the thing they value the most in a future job. But they also value being treated with respect.



TRANSCRIPT

Sydney Ideas podcast

What will the future of women's work look like?

Friday 24 July 2020

And when we talk to them both in interviews and focus groups. They tell us that there are some gaps going on there, so what I'm trying to say there about the evidence, I think what we need to know is, we've got a highly capable female labor force.

They have real aspirations for their career. We're not necessarily meeting all the things that they want from their careers and we've got quite a bit of work to do, because this young female labour force is a force to be reckoned with.

And I think employers and governments really need to pay some attention to, to what it is that they're after and what they want to seek to achieve after their own investment in themselves in education, in their own development.

ANNA BURNS

So Liz, I'm going to come back to you because there seems like there's an issue of risk management here. How do we, do we need to change the narrative slightly

ELIZABETH BRODERICK

I do think we need to change the narrative Anna, because a lot of the issues that we've all been talking about. They in the past will have been seen as women's issues. In fact, they're absolutely core to business continuity. Risk management.

I mean, if you weren't able to move your workers from the office to the home. Working from home, and I'm talking about non-essential non-frontline workers here.

But if you weren't able to move them very quickly from the office to home, then your business had no way of continuing, so flexible work which we've always thought about as a women's issue.

It's not. It's called a business continuity. And not only that, what we've learned through the pandemic is it wasn't the technology that was stopping us from embracing flexibility in all its form, it was inertia and habit.

And I think there's some good learning from that. Having said that, I'm not suggesting that working from home necessarily represents flexible work because flexibility is about control as to where and when you work.

And for most people, they were mandated to work from home. But I think what we learnt is that work is not a place that you go, it's what you do and we need to extrapolate with that.

But the other thing, Anna and maybe just lifting up because I agree with everything that Rae said putting it in the global context.

I mean, what are the influences, as I said before that will change work for everyone. And how will that work for women?

And we talked about technological examples, and I think the thing about technology and we're seeing accelerated digitization at the minute as a result of COVID



But technology for women and for others, it's increased our access to distance learning, which is important for women, but also our networks. I've seen, because I've consulted from my global somatic report in every region of the world.

And what I've seen is through technology women in different countries can now collectively organize and strengthen their political voice where it's too risky to do it in an individual country.

So just to give you an example. I was recently in Ethiopia and I saw women from different African nations advocate for changing other nations and they were able to do that through a much better level of collective organising.

I also saw though that with the growth of digital platforms and particularly, including the gig economy, there was a heightening of women's economic inequality; because there was increased informalisation of work.

And the trouble, I suppose a downside of technology for many women, is that the gig economy, in a sense, is an expansion of the kind of informal work that women have always or traditionally undertaken and there I'm thinking about women, piece workers, you know, piece, so they were particularly garment industry.

In the past, now we're kind of going back to that women pieceworkers, but we're using technological platforms. And I think there's a real risk that the move to online platforms risks substituting a digital sweatshop for a traditional one.

So there are some limitations there, and also the digital divide. I mean if women don't have access to internet, to smart technology in the way that men have and we know there's about 400 million, I think it is, less tablets in the hands of women than men.

Then their ability to participate in this new world will be reduced; their ability to access jobs in high growth areas such as the renewable sector will be reduced.

And not only that, the lack of women in STEM and particularly technology profession, means that the design of technology will likely, and I'm not saying necessarily intentionally, but will likely entrench a male dominated view of the world.

So I really wanted to just maybe put that shift. and the only other shift I'd like to mention; is the shift to sustainable economies and just transitions, because it does hold huge opportunity for women's employment.

I mean, when you look at the data it shows that women are more likely to be employed in the renewable sector than, say, compared with fossil fuels.

But if we continue with the structural discrimination that we see in workplaces, and there I'm talking about the strong degrees of occupational segregation, we will see that structural discrimination just replicated in these new high growth sectors.



TRANSCRIPT

Sydney Ideas podcast

What will the future of women's work look like?

Friday 24 July 2020

And the strategies around that would be things like temporary special measures, targets, those types of things to ensure that women are equally represented in growth areas with men.

So there just some of the, I think some of the issues that we need to address in the future changes of work.

ANNA BURNS

So Harinder; There's a theme here that that I that you've got a around internal and external and that seems that can work on a on a bunch of levels.

Do you want to unpack that a little bit for us because there's this theme of, you know, informal working from home, you know, internal, external domestic and at work, but it's bigger than that. Do you want to unpack that a bit for us?

HARINDER SIDHU

So basically, you know what is happening in the home. What is happening outside the home are things we need to balance but also, I guess when I talk about internal, external; it's really very evident to me that what is happening in Australia, sometimes is very similar to what is happening in other countries.

But actually, we're talking about our region, which is where I focus the great deal. There's a tremendous gap between what's happening here and what's happening overseas.

We're facing a disruption. This is a disruption to scale, which we have not seen for very long time. You know, we have seen every country in the world hit with the same event, including in Australia, with the coronavirus.

And there are two things that can happen; that do happen or can happen. One is that everyone is so narrowly focused on dealing with the disruption, that the sorts of things we think about in terms of gender equality or equity. They sort of get thrown out the window because they're seen as nice to have rather than need to have.

So what happens is we have this reversion to type I suppose, in the way that people start to think about it because this is really vital, this is important. We have to survive, and we'll work on that stuff too.

The other way you can think about it, if you have the bandwidth, is to recognise - and this is about being strategic; that disruption gives you an opportunity to reconceive how you might build your society or how you might you know, create the way that you might want to work.

And so when we're thinking about, in fact, certainly my organisation is thinking about this quite deeply at the moment, not just how can we actually harness those positives and embed them in a in a different imagined view of the world going forward.

But actually, what does that mean in terms of our work that we do, particularly with developing countries in our region.



So I'll give you one example. We were looking at how we pivot our development policy to support the countries in the region that are being hit with COVID.

And how do we sustain our agenda programs in that space because those governments are the ones that don't have the bandwidth really to think about this.

One of the programs we have in the Pacific is called 'markets for change' and that's been a program that's run for a long time in places like Papua New Guinea, that has ensured physical safety of women who are selling their produce that local markets, it supports their economic need.

More than ever women need access but we've adapted that now to also support women to provide home deliveries of their products so they can continue to sell their products; to disseminate information about handwashing and being physically staying healthy and safe, so they can sustain their business.

So it's really not losing sight of the fact that you can't let those things fall back was once you do, you're starting from a much lower base to bring things forward again.

So just as we're thinking about what we need to do here in Australia; there is a real recognition that we can't allow the gulf between what happens at home and what happens in our region to grow too wide because coming back from that is going to take so much longer, and is actually going to absorb more resources in the long term.

ANNA BURNS

So we've got a bunch of questions coming through on Slido if you're wanting to participate in that. the code is go to slido and then use work as the code.

And some of them actually really picking up on this theme of what's nice to have and what do we need to have

The first question we might go to is from anonymous and it says, Rae, what should the government be doing as part of the COVID recovery to not only guard against exacerbating inequality but also make progress on gender equality.

I think Rae start with you, but I think everyone's probably got some thoughts on that one.

RAE COOPER

It's a great question. I think that's the question at the moment.

So look, we're hearing a lot of talk about snap back and you know recover, you know, in terms of what recovery looks like.

I think probably all of the panel would agree that there's so much room to improve before COVID hit us that in fact we don't really want to snap back.

We want to try to do something like snap forward to some way different where we're trying to get rid of some of those inequalities that pre-existed before we entered into these dreadful couple of months.



TRANSCRIPT

Sydney Ideas podcast

What will the future of women's work look like?

Friday 24 July 2020

But I think one thing that's concerning us you know research group at the moment is trying to look at ways that we can start to design for recovery that are, that doesn't only have a focus on men's jobs.

So a lot of the pronouncements that we've had in from the policymakers around how we're going to recover from the process, has been around the sort of language of having a shovel lead recovery.

Now whilst it's really important. I'd be the last person in the world to suggest that government shouldn't be investing in infrastructure and shouldn't be investing in jobs, in important jobs in infrastructure and construction.

But I do think we need to think a little bit more broadly about how we build resilience in the economy and how we can make that an inclusive process. So we saw some little gems of hope I thought, in the early period of covered in the government's response.

Around things such as highly subsidised childcare. And around things such as, you know, putting job keeper into areas such as early childhood educators' wages.

Yet, I was really disappointed to say that the pulling back from those initiatives which you know really allowed us to keep moving to an extent.

And actually, I think, have a really significant impact on Australian women's and jobs and their working futures.

So I'd like to see us having a look at what do we conceptualise as recovery, and can we please just take note of the fact that the majority of people who are being affected as a part of the COVID crisis; because of where they work and because of the types of contracts that they're employed on are women, and try to build that in.

I guess the other thing that I'd say is we need to start to rethink some of the things that have made women more vulnerable in this process. One of them is that women working highly feminised employment and many of those jobs are very highly undervalued.

Yet we saw a really interesting essential poll a couple of weeks ago. I'm not sure if other panel members saw it; which was questioning about the value of the payments to highly feminised jobs that have been so critical in the COVID response.

One of the examples was early childhood educators and one of the examples was around registered nurses and midwives.

And I was interested to see the majority of Australians suggest that nurses and midwives were paid way under the value that they perform for us. So I think the community's kind of getting there.

But I think we need to think through how we use our industrial relations system, or how we how we use other mechanisms to try to value highly feminist work more. And the last thing I'd say is, in terms of recovery. It's more of a systemic issue.



But one of the reasons why women have been so profoundly affected as a part of the crisis has been because they suffer from precarious employment.

And I think we need to start to have a look at rather than talking about snapping back to where we were before; to actually take a look to see what as a community do we want our labour force to look like?

Are we okay with the fact that we actually have large and growing numbers of people, many of them women on precarious contracts, working in the gig economy working often in unpaid work in order to access the labour market?

And to investigate some of the assumptions that we've got going on there. I think if we worked on some of those areas, as a part of the recovery and actually start to think more broadly about you know, putting a gendered lens across recovery. I think that might go some way towards doing something slightly different than taking us to a better place than just stepping back from this current crisis.

MARIAM MOHAMMED

Anna could I jump in there to say Rae just said gendered lens; and we need an intersectional gendered lens on recovery as well.

So speaking of how can we move forward. How can recovery happen - it will not happen it will *not* happen, if you are sitting on tables, making decisions where everyone looks just like you.

And the question, the latest question that is just coming in, like, where are the men at? Well, this is not a table for the men. There are plenty of tables where the men are leading, but they will not be finding the solutions if they're sitting on those tables with a token woman - is not how recovery will happen.

Because, as Rae was saying, the workforce that is coming in - highly educated, young women - if we want the economy to recover and speaking in terms of money if nothing else; we are not going to make the right decisions that will take that into account.

That is why the recovery plan so far has not taken women and how the pandemic make is impacting women into account.

And like Minister Fletcher was saying on last week's ABC Q&A - we will only know after the pandemic is over, after we have been through it, what impact is going to have on the economy in terms of the gendered impact, etc.

The reason he says that, the reason the government says that is because the table that they're sitting on doesn't include people that are being impacted in Australia.

And when we say women. We don't just mean have that one white woman on the table. We mean have a variety of people on the table; have your indigenous people on the table, have black and brown people on the table as well because they can tell you Instead of waiting until it is over.

We can tell you now how it is going to impact the Australian economy in the future. And so instead of waiting and failing, we can address those issues right now.



TRANSCRIPT

Sydney Ideas podcast

What will the future of women's work look like?

Friday 24 July 2020

And to incentivise the men who are in leadership to take to take these issues seriously and bring more people into their boardrooms; I would say. that women and okay with young people, not just women right; all young people.

We are your employees today or your future employees. We are your customers today or future customers. We are your voters today or future voters. Right.

And these are issues that are important to young millennials and Gen Z's and millennials in general, right, and we like if these issues are not taken seriously; there are like Liz was saying it's an issue of business continuity there are serious repercussions for businesses and organizations that don't take it seriously.

You will see it all around. We see it in the example of how AMP handled it's a sexual discrimination suit.

And there are real repercussions to businesses taking bad decisions because young people take these issues seriously. Let me tell you.

And at the moment, young people hold every third dollar in circulation going forward. That is only going to increase.

Young people have a significant amount of power that we exercise through our votes in dollar terms. So these are real issues for business continuity that need to be addressed.

ANNA BURNS

So I want to pick up on something that, Mariam. Thank you.

There's a question here from Joanna, which is asking whether or not the government is supporting real jobs and I wonder here, Liz, perhaps you might want to comment on, do we have an issue with value that some jobs are saying, not just that sometimes are more valuable than others, but that we this there's a disconnect between feminised jobs not being as real as others perhaps?

ELIZABETH BRODERICK

Absolutely. And can I just even before that can I just say Mariam, I couldn't agree more with you. I mean, we need diverse voices in our rebuilding and recovery efforts.

And that's one of the things that I'm seeing across the world that we're that, you know, largely, the, you know, strategies and initiatives being developed are coming from a very homogeneous group in global COVID response teams across the world.

So if we could do one thing. I think, you know, that would be fantastic to make them more diverse.

But yeah, coming back to women's work and whether there's real jobs and then there's other jobs and the other jobs are the feminised jobs.

And I think it comes back to the points that Rae made about, you know, a lot of the language. I mean, language is so important. We talked about shovel ready jobs.



And I absolutely agree with Rae; infrastructure at this time is absolutely critical and big infrastructure programs are critical. But what about social infrastructure?

Because we've said here that if we are going to move forward on gender equality, one of the most important things we can do is to recognise, reduce and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work between men and women.

And that means we need an investment in care services, I'd put elder care equally with the aging of the world's population; we need it in childcare.

We need, of course, universal parental policies which we have kind of move forward here in Australia. But the problem is that caring is still women's work.

Whether that's unpaid or paid care work and it is invisible and it's undervalued. And the reality is the current economic models thrive on women's unpaid care and domestic work.

It's the type of work that sustains entire economies, yet it's undervalued and invisible and as the question said; it's seen as a lesser version of work, therefore it's paid less and I think the impact of values that depletes women's time and also depletes their economic security.

So, yes. We need a strong investment in that way. In fact, if I had to say. If there was one thing that we should do. I do think it's about the redistribution of paid and unpaid work here in Australia.

ANNA BURNS

So one of the things that was raised at the very beginning was around one of our strengths here in Australia is that we have a highly educated workforce and the young, the next generation of women are the most educated in history.

And Nick has asked a question, which is the most popular questions so far about what will be the affects of the government's refusal to support University's during COVID-19 and what will that be on women and what impact is that going to have in the short and long term.

And this is a massive question that could, we could spend probably many hours unpacking, but who would like to, Rae?

RAE COOPER

How about I start, I'm pretty sure that Miriam will have something to say too.

Look, it's been such a wonderful thing as an academic, at a one of our wonderful Australian institutions, watching the news every night watching 730 watching all of the, you know, social media and looking at all of our fantastic academics across the country,

giving commentary on you know the pandemic in you know, health terms; in terms of looking at capacity to treat the disease, about the economic impact, about the impact on things such as violence and whatnot.



TRANSCRIPT

Sydney Ideas podcast

What will the future of women's work look like?

Friday 24 July 2020

And I feel so proud as an academic watching people from across institutions, being able to speak to the public about what are pretty complex research agendas; where people are trying really to put towards the public good and that is what universities really are all about.

However, I've been really disappointed at the lack of support that education generally and higher education in particular, has had from government as a part of the process that's going on at the moment.

And that has implications that go to our notion as being a clever country; but it also has implications in terms of the broader sort of social impact that universities have

But also in a gendered sense because we know that workforces in higher education or highly, highly feminised; particularly unfortunately the lower levels within our classifications.

But I think this can have a, you know, really significant impact longer term on the broader economy. So for me, you know, I'm a very proud higher education advocate.

For me, I've been very disappointed with government's response in the context of COVID, to not supporting in a more active way, the operation of our wonderful institutions in higher education.

But at the same time I've been incredibly proud of the way that my colleagues from the sciences through the social sciences have responded and stepped up to communicate our research to the population, more broadly, and to try to make a contribution towards trying to solve this mess that we're in at the moment.

ANNA BURNS

Miriam, did you have anything else you wanted to add there?

MARIAM MOHAMMED

No I think Rae and Liz have already covered off everything that I was thinking of predominantly around paid and unpaid work and paid childcare and there is actually a question here about supporting both like all parents, to take on better part time roles and child care activities.

And I think neither parent is able to do it until we are not addressing the unpaid work that is being done in terms of care and also not supporting childcare, neither of the parents will really be able to recoup the economy from the massive deficit that we are in

ANNA BURNS

Absolutely. Harinder you mentioned something I'm going to segue slightly, but looking at, you know, employment sustainability and these ideas about you know the future and women's financial security.

You mentioned something about DFTA that the acquisition kind of, that the pipeline that you'd seen a real kind of scissor graph I guess that there was, you know, a steady stream of people coming and this is a theme across any number of industries where there's a steady stream of women coming in, but then they drop out.



And perhaps you've got some insights from how DFAT has handled that to help answer this question here about ensuring employment sustainability and how women can sort of

HARINDER SIDHU

Yeah, so thanks. I think the main thing we did was actually focus on it. We'd had situation we have over 30 years we had always recruited 50/50 men and women, not by any target or anything, just really merit. That's how we did it.

And within we saw the drop out at the leadership level and it was something we observed in 2014. Now you can talk about a pipeline, all you like but 30 years down the track these women have had grandchildren by then, and still not working their way through the pipeline.

So something is very wrong and so with Liz Broderick's help, we were able to lead a process. A very, very, powerful process through the place of stopping for a minute and just asking the question, why that is and then noticing when women were not represented, or we're not applying.

And starting to actively encourage women to apply for senior positions, for Ambassador positions and it's really, it seems like a really simple thing to do.

But if the DFAT story of, sort of, you know, nearly, you know, sort of increasing by nearly two-fold the numbers of Heads of Mission who are women has come about not really through a selection bias, but actually just through encouraging more women to put their hand up and then realising how very many talented women we have there who can do that task.

I think that that's that takes us a long way there. And often it is the case is expanded out to a more general proposition.

Often is the case that we believe that including women in the economy or including women in work or in leadership positions is very hard work and yes of course there are a great deal of barriers to get through, and there are lots of structural work to do.

But it's remarkable how far you can go. When you just start by noticing their absence and encouraging the presence and that's really a very powerful place to go.

I'm not suggesting that was all we did of course, we did quite a number of things as well. But it's always struck me as how extraordinary it is that people don't seem to notice that women are absent from a space.

And typically, a High commissioner in New Delhi. It was manuals, or something that people are starting to recognise there, but it was not uncommon to go to places where women were just absent. They just weren't there.

And it was particularly obvious because I was there, and I was sort of standing out. And I think that there's a lot more we can do across the board in Australia and elsewhere, by taking that very first step because from there, you then start putting systems in place and thinking about them.



We were talking about the recovery, and women are not there, then we really should start by noticing that and then thinking about what it is we can do to fix that situation.

In the end, I just wanted to say one thing, which is that if we are conceiving about the economy and society that we're going to have at the end of this process, whatever, whatever time it ends or whenever it ends.

We've got to start that conception now and we've got to start building towards that now and we can't afford any kind of economic recovery if women are not there.

50% of our population cannot be excluded from this. In fact, all the data and Liz and Rae are no doubt, and Miriam, are right across this.

All the data says that you're always going to do worse if you exclude women. If we want an economic recovery, this is where we have to focus in and I guess I'm a member of the government. I know that a lot of good evidence-based policy work is underway and I'm certain that that has been factored in. Thanks.

ANNA BURNS

Thank you, Harinder. I'm going to do a quick wrap up now because we're almost out of time.

Liz, I'd like to come back to you and ask, like if there's one thing, one action, one key point that you want people to take out of today. What's, what is that and who needs to do it.

ELIZABETH BRODERICK

I suppose one key point, but I would absolutely agree with Harinder that we have an amazing opportunity at the minute you know the assumptions that have underpinned practices and structures in the past are no longer necessarily valid.

So this is an incredible time to think about putting gender equality, front and centre. And we do that not particularly to preference women; gender equality is good for society. It's good for the rebuilding of economies. It's good for family so everyone benefits.

So I'd be putting gender equality, front and centre. And to do that, I would be asking what I call the gender question; I'd ask in relation to all the new initiatives that we're looking at implementing - will these initiatives benefit men and women equally.

Because then, at least it exposes you know impacts, which we may not have initially thought of when we started to design some of the policy solutions. So that's what I'd be doing and also make a special plug for care.

And I'd be talking about men and care because until we see a better redistribution of unpaid care work between men and women, we won't enable the amazing talent of women in this nation to actually be harnessed.



And just picking up on Rae's statistic there; that women were doing the lion's share of care coming into the pandemic; that's doubled.

So it's just going to make it that much difficult if we don't really address the issue of who does care in this country.

ANNA BURNS

We're getting a good list here.
Rae?

RAE COOPER

I agree absolutely with my two colleagues, I would almost repeat what they have to say. But I'd also say

Let's value women more and that means valuing their contribution wherever it is, whether it's at home in unpaid work or whether it's at work in paid work and, particularly, we could make a lot of inroads if we're trying to revalue and properly pay people working in various feminised occupations; that would go a long way towards helping us make some real inroads in terms of the gender pay gap.

I'd also say, rather than, I see there are some comments earlier this week about young women and young people and how resilient or not they are, and in current workplaces.

I'd say, rather than making those sorts of what I would say slightly in the current context mean comments about younger people.

I think we have to acknowledge that young people face a really different labour market to the generations before them particularly boomers and older; and we need to acknowledge that their experience has been very different.

It's about insecure work. It's about unpaid work and it's about insecure contracts and let's try to do something about that for our future workforce; which is young women who are highly educated and very ambitious about what they want to achieve for themselves and for their families.

ANNA BURNS

Harinder Sidhu

HARINDER SIDHU

Now, I don't really have much more to add, I think I know time is short, but I think I've said my piece.
Thank you.

ANNA BURNS

Mariam, last words from you?

MARIAM MOHAMMED

Thank you, Anna. So I would say, young people are not less resilient. We just have a much lower threshold for bull and that's why as employees. we will literally ghost you if you're being less than good to other employees; to women and other people.



TRANSCRIPT

Sydney Ideas podcast

What will the future of women's work look like?

Friday 24 July 2020

I would say that going forward, leaders of organizations need to question whether they have a genuine Policy, genuine outlook towards diversity and inclusion in general.

So that's not just women it is all people. And let me tell you, non-performative genuine diversity policies because we can see right through your bullcrap policies right.

Performative one woman on the board, performative one black person on the board. We can see right through that and that is not going to get you through a global pandemic that is bringing the world to it's knees.

Okay, we need genuine inclusion because those people will then be able to tell you; look, I can foresee people coming back to work need paid childcare. Right.

Why do we need to wait for the COVID to end for someone to tell a white Minister that we need pay childcare for people to come back to work. Right.

We need genuine part time roles that are not just full-time jobs compressed into two, three days for people to be able to genuinely work flexibly and build the economy.

So long as we are not enabling all people to come back to work, there will be 50% of our population will be sitting at home taking care of children because it just doesn't make economic sense to send children to daycare; pay daycare and go back to work. Right.

So if we are to conceptualise what this economy will look like post coven you'll need to act now, not just talk about having more women, more people of colour on your boards; you'll need to do it right now to come out better on the other end.

ANNA BURNS

Thanks for listening to the Sydney Ideas podcast. For more information head to sydney.edu.au/Sydney-ideas.

It's where you'll find the transcript for this podcast and our contact details if you'd like to get in touch with a question or feedback.

If you haven't already, subscribe to our podcast, so you never miss a new episode. Search for Sydney Ideas on Apple podcasts or Soundcloud.

Finally, we want to acknowledge that this podcast was made in Sydney which sits of the land of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. It is upon their ancestral lands that the University of Sydney is built.