



International Women's Day

International Women's Day (IWD) is a global day celebrating the economic, political and social achievements of women past, present and future.

Friday, 8 March 2019 marks 108 years since the first International Women's Day.

International Women's Day was honoured the first time in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland on 19 March 1911. More than one million women and men attended IWD rallies campaigning for women's rights to work, vote, be trained, to hold public office and end discrimination.

However less than a week later, on 25 March 1911, the tragic 'Triangle Fire' in New York City took the lives of more than 140 working women, most of them Italian and Jewish immigrants. This disastrous event drew significant attention to working conditions and labour legislation in the United States that became the focus for subsequent International Women's Day events.

Since those early days, International Women's Day has grown in prominence and reach, moving women in every corner of the world. The growing international women's movement has helped make International Women's Day a central point for action, to build support for women's rights and their full participation in the economy, politics, community and in everyday life.

According to the World Economic Forum, the gender gap won't close until 2186. On IWD, people across the world come together to force the world to recognise these inequalities – while also celebrating the achievements of women who have overcome these barriers.

The theme for 2019 is "Balance for Better."

Balance is not a women's issue, it's a business issue. The race is on for the gender-balanced boardroom, a gender-balanced government, gender-balanced media coverage and gender-balanced sports coverage. Gender balance is essential for Melbourne and all communities to thrive.

Committee for Melbourne asked Annette Kimmitt, Chief Executive Officer, Minter Ellison how she has seen the shift in gender parity or "balance for better" throughout her career as a senior female in business.

"Whilst there is still much to do, I've seen great progress towards inclusive behaviour and gender equity during my career in professional services. Reflecting on the start of my career, the conversations about gender equity had nowhere near the momentum they do today."

I am proud to work at Minter Ellison, which has a longstanding commitment to progressing gender equity and to help drive equality across the legal profession and in the wider community. Congratulations to everyone participating in International Women's Day for progressing conversations to support and advance equality in the workplace."

Committee also asked newly appointed Development Victoria CEO, Angela Skandarajah how she will call for a more gender balanced world.

"We can no longer simply 'call' for a gender-balanced world. We have to take action to make it happen.

Throughout my career, I've supported policies to bring balance into workplaces – including blind recruiting, gender pay audits and applying a diversity lens when building teams.

Leaders of industry must be leaders of cultural change in their workplaces. It benefits everyone. "

Committee for Melbourne Founder and pioneering woman, Pamela Warrender also reflected on the shift she has seen in gender equality since the early 1980s.

"I came from a generation of women who never entertained the idea of a career; societies expectations were very different then and there was little gender equality, especially in the boardroom. I wanted to work from the day I left school to develop my skills and a career but realised in those days my options were somewhat limited - I never let it stop me. In the 1980's, returning from a job in the UK, I saw great potential to develop an ailing Melbourne and with the encouragement of a leading Canberra female journalist and 3 or 4 like-minded corporate executives, I was able to establish the Committee for Melbourne. Even in those days there were few women in boardroom making my job challenging but we got there. Today I see a seismic shift for women and the opportunity for them to choose satisfying and rewarding careers. Although it has come a long way, for a continued balanced and healthy society, we need to keep striving for gender equality."

The 2019 **#BalanceforBetter** campaign doesn't end on International Women's Day. For the next year, the campaign theme will provide a unified direction to guide and galvanize continuous collective action.

We encourage you to put your hands out and strike the #BalanceforBetter pose and post to social media to amplify the message. Here are Committee for Melbourne CEO, Martine Letts and Communication and Stakeholder Engagement Manager, Laura Melvin at the Fearless Girl statue at Fed Square.



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