



FEMALES IN FINANCE INDUSTRY

Speech Notes

FIFI – Females in the Finance Industry

The Australian Indigenous Education Foundation

Date: 1 May 2008

By: The Hon. **Linda Burney** M.P. HonDEd DipEd
Minister for Community Services, New South Wales



I begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land that we are meeting on today – the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation – and pay my respects to their Elders past and present. I do this acknowledgement to recognise the importance of truth telling.

Can I also recognise:

- Andrew Penfold, CEO of the Aboriginal Indigenous Education Foundation and initiator and Chair of the St Joseph's College Indigenous Education Foundation
- Amy Somes and her fellow FIFI members
- These are: Amy Somes, Maryanne Drewe, Finola Burke, Jolanta Masojada, Moira Daw, Jenny Owen, Andrea Fletcher, Karen Towle, Nola Hodgson and Paulette Bailey
- The many other committed and high profile women here this evening.

Thank you for inviting me to speak tonight.

Being here gives me an opportunity to support two personal passions:

- **Education**
- and
- the incredibly important role **volunteers** play in supporting people and communities in need.



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We should recognise and salute the members of FIFI, Andrew Penfold and his Foundation Board – they are all making a difference through their volunteer work.

Education is the corner stone of social justice. It's the most effective way to empower people to achieve their goals – regardless of their background.

For me personally, education has been a springboard from which I have realised my personal and professional goals.

Many people ask me how I got to this point in my life – I learnt to read as a little girl.

I began my life long learning in Whitton, a 2-3 teacher school, then completed my senior years at Penrith High School.

A government scholarship enabled me to gain a Diploma of Teaching at Charles Sturt University – or as it was then, Mitchell College of Advanced Education.

But to understand and appreciate the importance of education we must understand what it means if you don't undertake a full and comprehensive education.....

...and this is particularly relevant for Aboriginal people.

Can I remind you that it was only as recently as 1972 that the authority to exclude an Aboriginal child from school based solely on their Aboriginality was removed from the NSW Teacher Handbook.

Or that there is a strong correlation between education and people's capacity to actively participate in, and contribute to, the life of their community.

For example, evidence shows that:

- Completing Year 10 or 11 increases an Aboriginal person's chance of employment by 40 per cent.
- Completing Year 12 increases employment prospects by a further 13 per cent.



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- Having a post-secondary qualification increases employment prospects by between 13 per cent and 23 per cent.

We also know that the poverty rates of people 15 years and over declines dramatically as their educational qualifications increase.

So what Andrew is achieving, with your support, is incredibly important for the huge numbers of talented young Aboriginal people struggling to find opportunities.

I also want to say that it's important that Aboriginal families participating in the Australian indigenous education Foundation programs have choice.

It's also essential that the schools involved in these programs ensure the students remain in touch with home and their culture

Tonight we should also celebrate the positive stories, and I'm reminded of the Paul Kelly song "From little things big things grow".

Currently, there are around 120 Indigenous doctors in Australia and 120 Indigenous medical students (Australian Indigenous Doctors Association).

We also have around 420 teachers in NSW, a growing number of lawyers, and many Aboriginal University students enrolled in a diversity of courses and degrees.

When I graduated in 1978, there were 10 or 12 teachers in NSW.

Conclusion

It's always inspiring when people's concern for social justice finally reaches a "tipping point" – that's when ideas become reality and concrete outcomes are generated.

My congratulations go to Andrew, the members of FIFI, the schools involved, and their terrific young students.



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Mick Dodson quote from his Annual Report of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, 1993:

Social justice is what faces you in the morning. It is awakening in a house with adequate water supply, cooking facilities and sanitation. It is the ability to nourish your children and send them to school where their education not only equips them for employment but reinforces their knowledge and understanding of their cultural inheritance. It is the prospect of genuine employment and good health: a life of choices and opportunity, free from discrimination.

I'd like to finish with a quote from Carmel Tebbutt:

Your education is the one thing in life that can't be taken from you.

This is truebut you have to have an education in the first place.