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| Change Our Game IWD Lunch – Tracey Holmes  |
| Video transcript |

**[Change Our Game Logo]**

**Tracey Holmes:**

I'd like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land who are here on today, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, and pay my respects to the elders past, present and future and any other indigenous people and leaders that are with us today. I'd also like to thank the Victorian Office For Women In Sport And Recreation, Dr. Bridie O'Donnell, who does the most incredible work. When I heard that I'd been invited here, first of all, I love coming to Melbourne. It's really lovely. So often when I come here, people say to me, "Oh, welcome home." I think that's fabulous because I was born in Sydney, but I actually really love coming to Melbourne. I do feel quite at home, so thank you. But it was rather intimidating because I just think Bridie O'Donnell is one of the most amazing Australians, and one of the most amazing athletes on the planet.

That's not a male or female thing. That's just a credit to the person and the stamina, and the absolute force of nature that she is. To come here and be on a stage after her is rather intimidating. Thanks very much, Bridie. I also like to acknowledge the men who are amongst us today. I think that is also a great sign of how far we've come. In days and weeks and years gone by, you'd look around at a room like this. It would be 100% female. I think it's really wonderful that men join us on this journey as equal partners. Can we please have a round of applause for the men? Now, according to the latest Roy Morgan Research, which came out today, Wonder Woman has overtaken Batman as Australia's favorite superhero. Yeah, I thought that was pretty good.

I guess it also backs up some of the facts and figures that we got at the end of last year. I think they came out about the mid to late November from True North Research. They were doing a measurement of the respect, the enjoyment, the trust, the pride and the bond amongst sports fans with the teams that they follow. The top four teams in Australian sport, on those measurements, are the Rugby Sevens gold medalists from the Rio 2016 Olympics. Second, the Matildas who recently, as we know, just won the Cup of Nations here in Melbourne and they're on the way to the World Cup. In third place, the Diamonds, with an absolutely huge history of international success. In fourth place, the Opals, former World Champions, three-time Olympic silver medalists. That is a phenomenal result. The top four teams are female teams in Australia. That is also worth a round of applause.

Now, I saw Dave Colbert when I walked in here this afternoon, and he said, "What are you gonna say? Anything controversial?" And I said, "No." He said, "But every time you open your mouth, it's controversial." I don't mean it to be, but maybe with some of the stories that I tell you today, you will see that I had a fairly different upbringing. I think that has made me see things slightly different to the way many other people see things. I don't mean always to be swimming against the tide; but quite often, I find myself in that position. I'm not making apologies or excuses. I'm just saying that's just how it is. I was asked to speak today about my own personal and professional journey, the barriers and the learnings that I've gathered along the way. Why it's important for women in sport to be reported on, recognized, and celebrated both on and off the sporting arena. Also, to discuss how far we've come and what more needs to be done, and by who? Of course, the importance of diversity on our playing arenas around our board tables and in our media.

First off, let me say this. I'm really not a great fan of pointing out difference. I'm not a great fan of segregation of any type. I often wonder how are we going to get to the point of genuine inclusion without necessarily having to identify what is different first; whether that's gender race, religion, sexual orientation, and as I get older, ageism. When I got to 50, I said to my husband, "I can't believe that for the next 50 years, because I plan on living and working for a very long time yet, I only get to take one box on all of those documents." 50 plus. Surely, there should be a new box. 50 is the new 30, and so on.

I'm advocating for that as we move on. What I am a fan of is humankind. It shouldn't matter that we are male, female, intersex, transgender, queer, heterosexual, black, white, brown, yellow, rich, poor, abled or disabled. And it shouldn't matter whether we arrived on a boat or a plane or we were born here 60,000 years ago. However, I'm not so naive as to think that every day of the week, people are not treated differently simply because one or more of those labels applies to them. To be honest, I said this Mel when I arrived. I'm not even sure I'm a fan of celebrating a specific day for women.

At the ABC today, in order to celebrate International Women's Day, almost everybody on air is a woman. Meaning on International Women's Day, most of the men get the day off to go and play golf. Now, there's something very wrong with that picture. I'm gonna talk a little bit about pictures today because it's pictures and how we frame the world around us that help us to achieve or not our own personal ambitions and aspirations. The words we use to describe those pictures is what defines the world we individually perceive. Much of the work I do at the ABC is covering the big issues of sport, governance, doping, intersex, you get the idea. I generally don't do very much match coverage on this that is one of the big events like the Olympic Games or the FIFA World Cup.

Even then, I prefer to work on the stories or interviews that enable an audience to see that absolutely nothing is black and white. Nothing is simple. When you seek truth, you find the truth comes in many various shades. Everybody's truth is slightly different according to the life experience that have made them what they are, and how we perceive incidents compared to any number of other people that might have experienced exactly the same event or witnessed or been privy to the same experience. What you will take home from today after hearing the panel and the various speakers will be quite different to what the other people at your table are going to take home. That doesn't mean any story is any less legitimate. It just means that the truth can be seen in so many different ways. Now that is no different in sport, particularly, when you're dealing with issues that have been touched by culture, or race, or religion, or gender.

As a starting point in my work, I tried to afford every person the right to put their case. Most people in the world are after exactly the same things; food, shelter, security, and what is best for their children. That is universal. Despite what our politically-elected representatives sometimes like to portray, people from other places or other religions or even a suburb away or really not very different from us. Unless, of course, you're comparing someone from Sydney to someone from Melbourne, and then the distinctions are really stark. I do recognize that. In the past week, I was lucky enough to spend two days with a group of 50 athletes from a variety of sports that have been earmarked for Australia's team for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

Now, with them, were a dozen or so of past Olympic gold medalists called the alumni and the Australian Army Special Operations unit. It was part of an Australian Institute of Sport program called Gold Medal Ready, designed to work on cognitive responses in times of stress. The idea being that what you practice most becomes your default position when all else around you is turning to rubbish. Now, one of the Special Operations soldiers told of his last tour to Afghanistan. He said, whenever he was driving through an area that he felt might have been a bit dodgy, he would stand up in the vehicle because he thought if he ever drove over a land mine, it would be better to be standing and have the explosion go through his legs than be sitting and have the explosion and go through his spine.

On this particular day in Afghanistan, he drove over a land mine. He was standing. He remembers coming to because he was knocked out from the experience. He couldn't see anything. He was blinded by the smoke, the gas, the fumes. He could hear that there was mayhem all around. He tried to stand up. He fell down. He tried to stand up again. He fell down. Then his cognitive experience clicked into gear. He felt for the cord that would hopefully still be attached to the radio where he could call in help, where he could instruct the vehicles in front and behind what they had to do next, and he could call for a helicopter to come and get him out of this incredible experience. What had happened? He's knees had snapped upwards. Every bone in his leg, both legs, had been broken. He'd torn or severed every muscle, fiber, tendon in both of his legs.

He was flown out, returned home. He had to leave his unit there, but he had saved every single person in his unit by being able to hop into that situation because he'd practiced it over and over again before it actually happened. He is now walking on both legs. Obviously, he has incredible pain. He's been through any number of operations, but the resilience of these people, as we know, is quite phenomenal. Now, one of the other stories I heard on the weekend, and it's by no means as dramatic or life threatening, but showing that the process is exactly the same was from Leisel Jones, who was one of the gold medal alumni there. She was talking about lessons that she had to learn before winning her gold medal at her third Olympic Games.

She knew that she had all the physical skills to match anybody else in the pool, but the way she reacted to stress was incredibly negative for her. She always felt nauseous. She always had to go to the bathroom several times before her race, which is not easy when you need about three or four people to zip up and unzip one of those swimsuits that the swimmers wear. She thought what she had to do was change the way she had a mental response to the physical reaction that her body was always going to put her through whenever she went to one of these major events. Her mindset to change. What Leisel didn't realize, until fairly late in her career, was that what had worked for everyone else in the team was not going to work for her. She had to find her own solution. Then, it hit her. She said she felt most relaxed and most comfortable ahead of her races by talking. Non-stop talking. I mean non-stop talking. She hasn't changed.

Getting ready in the dressing rooms, milling about in the warm up pool, standing in the corridors, even marching out onto the pool deck, she would talk to anyone and everyone. Anyone that had an ear, she'd be talking to. She said the results of that was to fold. It helped relax her, and it helped put her competitors off, well and truly now. I shared that story for two reasons. I was never an Olympic swimmer or an Olympic anything. In fact, I'm no athlete at all. How do you think I feel sitting at a table with Mel and Tal and Sharni and Bridie, unbelievable. But I grew up in a surfing family. My mom and dad both competed. They both did exactly the same thing. My dad also shaped surfboards for many of the world's top competitors. My mom ran surfing contest.

Now we're talking back in the 60s here, complete hippie ville. My sister, my only sibling, became a professional surfer. She's now a vice president of the World Surf League. As you can see, I was surrounded by a top in sport, competitive edge. Surfing took my family out of Australia when I was three. We lived in South Africa. It was there. The waves were big, the sharks were even bigger, but nothing an Aussie surfer can't handle. Just asked Mick Fanning, who's quite famous around the world for punching sharks. In South Africa was under the apartheid regime at the time. I learned about racism. I learned about underclasses. I learned about power, and the dynamics of that power and politics. I learned that often those in power did not even see how they discriminated against those who weren't. At our local beach, like many others, only whites could surf. Black people were allowed on to the beach. They were the ones carrying a skis around the next with drinks an ice creams for the white people.

Then as fate would have it, we went to live in Hawaii with one of the most famous Hawaiian surfing families called the Aikau's. They were famous big wave riders. All the children, boys and girls became lifeguards at some of the most dangerous surfing beaches in the world. There's a famous bumper sticker that you can see in many parts of the world that says Eddie Would Go. That was named after one of the brothers, Eddie Aikau, because he would only ever go when the surf was about 20 feet high, and nobody else would go. These are the sorts of people we're talking about. Now, the Aikau's lived at the bottom of an old Chinese graveyard. They were caretakers of this. As a kid, because I was living there too, I'd wake up in the morning. I'd go and sit under one of the mango trees and had my breakfast. Then I navigate between the tombstones on my way to school, which was next door across a little footbridge that bridged a canal.

Now at our Valley Elementary, I learned to do what you had to do when an earthquake struck, which happened quite often. Everything would slide off your desk. The ground would shake. People would fall over. You had to dive on your desk and wait for the sirens to finish before climbing back out. I also learned about Hawaiian and Japanese culture. They were many Japanese there despite Pearl Harbor just being a few kilometers down the road, and a reminder of the Japanese attack on the US Navy base there that sucked the USA into a world war. But I learned that people with different histories, different beliefs, of different color, and different cultures quote all live together successfully. Living in that Chinese graveyard as husband, wives, and children were people of various descent; Hawaiian, Australian, American, Eskimo, American Indian. Portuguese and Japanese.

I learned essentially that they were all the same. Although, their stories were of a slightly different hue. When we returned to Australia, my mom would enter my sister and I surfing contest; local, regional, state, hopefully we go on to nationals. I hated every single event. I hated paddling out in the cold water in the middle of winter. Anytime, I had to compete. The surf was messy, sloppy, horrible. I spent all of those years a particular shade of blue. I'd spend entire weekends trying to get rid of the hypothermia that had set in. I didn't like it at all. What I did like was perfectly blue, sunny skies, temperatures about 30 or above, wave's about that high breaking gently. But that was never the weekends that I got to compete.

I share this story with you because, after a while, I had a bit of a Leisel Jones-like epiphany. In each of those surfing contest, I'd paddle out the back and I just sit there, too afraid to catch a wave. Wave after wave, one of my competitors would go. They ride the wave in. They get a great score. They'd paddle back out. They do it again. I just sat there, and I would talk to everybody. I would spend the entire hate talking to every competitor. I knew more about World Champion, Pam Burridge, than Pam Burridge knew about herself. I asked them about their families, they live, how they like competing, where they went to school, what else they did. I'm pretty sure they hated every single moment of it. It was my absolute failure as an athlete that taught me how to watch, how to listen, and how to get other people talking.

It was an absolute failure as an athlete, but taught me what I enjoyed most was asking about and gathering information on other people's stories. I had what it took to be a journalist. Now, if you have a choice, I would say follow the Leisel Jones method, where you can talk to your opponents and become an Olympic gold medal champion. I can also guarantee that Plan B is not so bad. Talk to your opponents and become a journalist and work in the media, where you get to meet these people and find out their life stories, what drives them, What motivates them, what makes our societies better. It's all of their stories. In a sentence, I've been lucky enough to cover the world's biggest sporting events multiple times over, interview some of the most fascinating people on the planet. I've lived and worked in various cities like Hong Kong, Beijing, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, all of those experiences I would never trade.

To the next point, have I encountered barriers? Well, I try not to see the world around me in those terms. This comes back to the pictures and the language that I was talking about earlier. I don't see barriers. I see challenges. Again, it's about the pictures that you create in your own mind and how you address those. I see one great big jigsaw puzzle where sometimes you think you've got just the right piece to put into that particular area you're working on and it turns out you don't. Actually, you have got the right piece. It's just for somewhere else a little bit later. The challenge is to find the piece that plugs that hole now, so you don't wanna give up. You don't want to let others defeat you. There are not barriers. There are just hurdles. barriers are put there to stop you. Hurdles are put there to challenge you. There are no roadblocks. There are just problems to solve.

I'm fairly certain that every single person in this room, male or female, can identify hurdles that they've had to overcome or problems they have had to resolve to get to where they are today. We have all faced them; not because we female or male, or black or white or rich or poor, but because somebody else somewhere wanted to put one of those labels on you. They are words that others use to describe you. I don't wake up each morning and say, "Now, what's in store for me today because I'm a 50 plus white woman from Sydney." Those labels just don't exist. Anyone referencing my age, my color, my gender, and my city of birth, and I apologize for that again. Anyone referencing those labels is actually telling you more about them than they are about you. Don't let others define who you are, or the picture that you have of who you want to become. Don't let the language of others stifle who you are.

Tracey Holmes:
The language that we use in our daily lives is extremely important. the words we use to describe those pictures in our mind. If we hear of glass ceilings and barriers, we perceive blockages. We might imagine a vision of banging our heads on glass ceilings, that leads to thoughts of difficulty or pain or even worse, suggesting it's a waste of time and we give up. Or wait for others to break through for us. But if we see it differently, we can approach it differently. We need to change that negative to a positive as Leisel Jones did, as the Special Ops soldier did. Instead of glass ceilings and roadblocks, if we can all Sally Pearson and instead see a row of hurdles in front of us, we know it's possible to leap over every single hurdle one by one. When I first lived in Hong Kong, I went to an introduction language course. I did the same thing when I got to Beijing, because Cantonese and Mandarin is so different.

One of my teachers explain something to me that I think about really often. It was about the language itself, the pictures that painted, and how it made people think. In western thinking, we pretty much think in straight lines. We move forward one step at a time. We move towards a goal. We don't like anything to get in our way. Often our sentences start with I, and our stories have us as its central theme. In Eastern thinking, the patterns are not linear. They are circular. Everything is seen as part of a bigger picture. Every detail is worth considering. Sometimes the chairs on the deck need to be shuffled. There is a book that I would like to recommend all of you try and pick up. It's kind of old now, but it's called The Geography Of Thought. It's written by a social psychologist Richard Nisbett. I highly recommend it for this reason.

Westerners and Asians were brought into a room at one point at a university in America to look at a fish tank. They got to look at it for 10 minutes, and they walked out. About half an hour later, they were called back in with the fish tank removed, and they were asked what they recalled of the fish tank. Most of the Westerners said, "Oh, there a couple of little fish but there are two really big fish swimming around sharing that tank together." Most of the Asians described a bit of seaweed in the bottom right hand corner, a little treasure chest over on the left, two sea horses, some shells, a very coarse sand, and a couple of large fish. For one group, it was all about faster, higher, stronger in a forward motion, that it was so important; setting goals, seeing them be rewarded.

The individual at the center, the big fish was all. For another, it was about how you set the goals, about the journey, not the destination, about the mosaic of life rather than the rewards. Now both of those have merits. If we could understand the other, it would give us all an absolute advantage. I'd like to do a little experiment of my own here today, just for a moment. I'd like to all of you to close your eyes. Don't be embarrassed. No one's filming you. Close your eyes. Now, imagine you are watching this evenings news or listening to the radio on your drive home, or reading your favorite news site. The words you hear or see the Australian cricket team. Open your eyes. Be honest. Put your hand up if the vision you had was on the Australian men's cricket team. Have a look around. Don't be embarrassed. Take them up, take them up. We're pretty much all in the same boat here. That's interesting, isn't it?

One of the areas I work at the ABC, we conducted our own orders. We thought we were doing pretty well in covering sports equally. The teams, the games, the tournament's contested by men and women. As it turned out, much like your survey, Bridie, the audit that you've been doing. It was pretty poor, if you boil it down to percentages. It was also pretty poor in the language that was being used. Now to report on the Australian cricket team is always the men's team. That particular identifier was never used, yet we always said the Australian women's cricket team, which diminishes the women. Because, by default, it means they are not the national cricket team. Yet, they are both equally our national teams despite whatever the results might be on the field. To be accurate, it should either be the men's cricket team or the women's cricket team, or the Australian cricket team competing at the Women's World Cup or the men's World Cup.

Just as an aside, if we described a team that was dependent on the results or rankings, then the Australian cricket team would, in fact, be the women's team. The Australian football team would, in fact, be the Matildas. It's really interesting how just such a subtle shift in language can create a picture but then goes on to mean so much to so many people and the next generation coming through. For all of its faults, an organization like the IOC, the International Olympic Committee, has got one thing right. They don't talk about the hundred meters and the women's hundred meters. Every single event they have across all a sports is, as an example, the men's hundred meters, the women's hundred meters. In their scheduling of events, it's a men's race, a women's race, a men's race, a women's race so that broadcasters can't just do a whole lot of men stuff and completely ignore the women's stuff.

It's all wrapped in together. They got this right quite some time ago. A lot of other sports around the world still need to catch up. One of the other things I noticed that the ABC in this order was that we never ever report on Formula Three. Who saw the report on Formula Three recently in the media? We just don't do it. However, in one week, there were four stories on Formula Three, and it was about a female driver who had crushed. Seriously, about 99% of Formula Three drivers for the past many decades are men. I guarantee you, there have been shit loads of pressures but we didn't report on any of them. We did report on the one female driver who had a crash in Formula Three. That also says something about these inbuilt biases that we have, where we think that's a story when in fact, it's not a story if we insert a different gender.

The way we perceive things, the words we use are very important. How far have we come? Well, two quick pictures. The first was in 1989 when I was a trainee broadcaster at the ABC specializing in sport. My first day on the job. I was shown to a desk in a room that I shared with three other broadcasters, all of them men. The head of sport, the executive producer, the researcher were also men. There were two other women in the department. They were the two secretaries. When it came to lunch, I quickly realized, when I walked out with the men, they all looked at me strangely like, "Shouldn't you be going to have lunch with the women?" I thought, "No, shouldn't I be going to have lunch with the sports broadcasters, which is what you are, and which is what I'm training to be?"

Again, it's those words, the words you use to identify yourself and the words they were using to paint me in a particular box, or put me in a particular area. That wasn't how I saw myself. I saw myself as a broadcaster first, not a female. Fast forward now, to my first day on the job at China's Central Television in Beijing. Now, we're jumping forward to from 1989 to 2004, I walked in and every single person in that newsroom was female. My director that day for the three sports shows we had to do was female. The producers were female. The journalists were female. The camera people were female. I was amazed. When I express this to them. I said, "Wow, I have never been in a newsroom before where the entire ship is female." They looked at me like I was really weird. Like, "Why not?" I was like, "Well, that doesn't happen in Australia yet." We do still have some way to go.

I realized it wasn't unusual for them. Again, we're not unique in the world but there are certainly some other parts of the world that we can learn from. Now, when I was first given the job as host of Grandstand, I became the first female host of a national sports program in Australia. Again, the shit hit the fan. People phoned in. People wrote in. People were sending all sorts of messages. "How can anyone listen to a female whole weekend? This is ludicrous. The ABC has gone mad." Other people would phone up and say, "We've heard her before and she laughs too much. You have to get a stop laughing seriously." All of these sorts of things, but those barriers are long gone. We have come a very long way. But there is still some way to go. I want to tell you the story. The 1991 World Netball Championships played in Sydney. Because back then, we didn't have very much of any ball-by-ball descriptions of female sport. These were on in Sydney, and it was during the weekend of rugby league.

I was sent down there. Every time they went around the grounds to check on the score and other venues, they will also come to me so I could update the score of the netball. Anyway, it soon became very obvious that the game on was that, was far more interesting and entertaining and close than anything that was happening in the NRL that weekend. David Morrow was the man on it. He said, "Tracy, just stay with it. There's seven minutes to go in this game and it was going goal for goal, goal for goal Australia, New Zealand. It was absolutely fantastic." I stayed with it. That became my first piece of live commentary. The crowd went berserk. Australia won by a single point. The Aussies were diving on each other on the floor in the middle. The Kiwis were absolutely devastated.

The crowd which was capacity it was just an absolute room full of extreme positive energy. It was women's sport. Then I started, I got carried away with myself and I was doing interviews. I was describing the crowd and the game and finish. I realized I better get back to the NRL. I was doing all of this on a phone. I threw that to David and he didn't pick up straight away. When he did, his voice was breaking. He was in tears because it had been such a sensational game. Now, there was no intention at the start of that weekend to have live commentary of that match. But he took it, and I think all of the male members of that team then suddenly saw things in a very different light. We know that we've come so far now with AFLW on, NRLW on, our cricketers, our netballers, our basketballers, our football players. It is absolutely sensational. One of the areas we do still need to improve upon is mixed teams in commentary.

I think the cricket really gets this right, men and women; discussing men and women, not male commentators for the male teams and female commentators for the female teams. We've gotta get a little bit beyond that. Many years on, many things have improved. I think what we need to do and all of us, I challenge all of us on International Women's Day, when we walk out of here today, have a look at the street as we walk down it. Have a look at what Australia looks like because Australia is a phenomenal place. When we hosted the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, there was a community of people for every single one of the 200 nations competing. You can't find that anywhere else on earth. Yet, when we look at a lot of the sports teams that represent us or the boardrooms that govern sport, or the commentary teams that describe it for us, they don't look like the streets we walk down.

That is our next challenge. So that those teams and boardrooms and commentary teams and everybody involved in sport actually looks like the country we live in. We're all after the same things. We're all Australian together. We all love sport, and how fabulous it is that sport provides a canvas for us to be able to paint a picture that is totally inclusive. So the challenge for each of us now is to make that ideal a reality. That's something that each and every one of us can do. Thank you for listening.  **[Change our Game logo]**

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