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| Change Our Game IWD Lunch – Dr Bridie O’Donnell  |
| Video transcript |

**[Change Our Game Logo]**

**Dr B. O’Donnell:**

I'm really thrilled to be here and I'm really thrilled to see all of you. This is our biggest ever networking events, so well done all of you. I'm super pumped that her excellency, the honorable [inaudible 00:00:16] and the Governor [inaudible 00:00:17] are here and Lizzie [inaudible 00:00:19] and Simon. And we'll be welcoming the minister as soon as he's able to arrive. It's been a busy day for so many people, so thank you.

I'm absolutely sentimental and I cry easily. And the things that make me cry the most are usually outstanding achievements and they need to be outstanding, but also they need to come with the story and the sacrifice and the difficulty and the nuance. And there was no better representation of those types of things to make me cry as an absolute highlights reel of things that inspire me in sport.

And so I wanted to share a couple of those with you because today we're talking about women in sport media. And just while I'm talking you have to make sure you start eating while I'm talking because there's nothing worse than cold, medium, or lamb.

One of the first highlights in my highlights reel is absolutely the footage that we saw all over the world before there was social media of Julie Moss. Now in 1978, the Iron Man Triathlon was born, four guys sat around a table, what a surprise and started showing off about which event in Hawaii was the most difficult. And they said, what about if we combined all three of them and we made you do it in one day. And a lot of other guys went, cool idea.

Four years later, a young exercise physiology student thought I might have a go at that. And she was a good athlete, but she wasn't as prepared for an Iron Man event that as she could've been. She started the race and somewhere 15, 16 hours later, she was crawling down the finishing straight in the dark and confused and dehydrated. And the CBS cameras started to follow this thinking this is kind of interesting. There's a woman she doesn't want to give up, but she wants to finish. She's coming nowhere, last.

And there was footage and then photographs captured that was circulated all over the world of this woman crawling along the ground in a full running gear with a hat on and a race number looking up at the camera saying, "Where's the finish line? Show me the finish line." And amazingly, this piece of footage was something that propelled Mark Allen's career in Iron Man Triathlon. He went on to race five times and not win. Then he won five consecutive times. He and Julie Moss got married. It's like the ultimate bumble app, right? You're crawling along the ground looking for the finish line.

The second most momentous piece of sporting imagery and content that I ever saw was the commentary that occurred around the winning of the women's marathon at the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games. David Colbath who's here today, his voice and Steven Moneghetti brought home the most exceptional of Karen McCann. Footage of her running through the city side by side with Helen Cherono from Kenya. Karen was a very tall, skinny marathon running woman from Australia and Cherono was a really, really small Kenyan and they back and forth were taking the lead.

And you could see that Moneghetti and you could hear Moneghetti's voice cracking as he was commentating. He was completely biased in his commentary. You kind of started saying [inaudible 00:03:24]. Meanwhile, Colbath was trying to remain professional and tell us what was happening. And she ran into the stadium, the sound of 90 something thousand people cheering for Karen McCann as she didn't sprinted away from Helen Cherono still gives me goosebumps. That was extraordinary.

And then my third and most amazing highlight for me around professional and exceptional sporting performances was watching the London Olympic women's road race. I was in the Netherlands at the time in a pub in Breda and standing around a whole lot of group of men cycling fans. And there Marianne Vos, undoubtedly the [inaudible 00:04:02] of women's professional cycling and her Dutch team were absolutely throwing down the gauntlet to every single other rider in that race.

It started raining in London. The road was really dirty. They started coming into the mall where there would be a sprint finish. And the two iconic faces of Marianne Vos who went on to win and the English woman, Lizzie Armitstead, who came second looking just devastated to not win in her home country. And yet Vos had come second five consecutive times at world championships. She'd been beaten by five different women at world championships and here she was winning her first ever Olympic gold medal.

And the two things that bring all of these images and words together are the ability to provide the pictures, the ability to show live footage of people competing in sport. The voices of those experts, the background that they have, the content, the story, the effort that they go to, to be a great commentator or to be a great writer.

Bonnie Ford, who's been writing and covering sports for decades, said that she was the first woman to walk into the room at the Tour de France Press Gallery in the Press room, which apparently is way more grueling than doing the race. You don't get a massage, you don't get [inaudible 00:05:12]. You get nothing. And she talked about what it was like to walk in there and see all these men tapping away on computers and even typewriters and calling in their stories. No one would help her. No one would give her an idea of how she could get from one hotel to the next.

And she has created and continue to write some of the most exceptional stories, human stories about what is involved in the sacrifice of winning. And that's something we know Tracy Holmes is going to talk about her. Her passion is sport, but what she brings to that is the insight and exceptional humanity that accompanies it.

Today we wanted to focus on women in sports media because we know that there are beautiful stories and gut wrenching stories and images that are powerful and they need to be shown and they inspire all of us. But there's a lot of work to do. We need to hear more women's voices commentating all forms of sport. We need to see more women writing code column inches in magazines and newspapers if we still have newspapers in a while.

And I'd like to send out a special shout out to Cheryl who's here today. A woman who's been doing an informal audit, if you like, of newspaper articles about women in sport. We're up to day 106 I believe. Now she's been helpfully tagging me in every single one of these tweets, which is better than being tagged in some of the other stuff that you get tagged in about sport. Helpful feedback, I think we call it now. Get a lot of feedback on Twitter.

106 days in a row and she's been looking at mainstream newsprint and how many stories relate to women. It's pretty crappy. It's somewhere between 0% and 10%. So we know people are writing great stories. We know people are showing great footage and in fact social media has completely changed the way professional women's sport has been brought to the consumer and to the fan.

And I know that social media saves my ability to connect with people when I was living in Italy and no one spoke English. But how can these stories get elevated to where they rightly belong? How can sub-editors or editors of newspapers understand that those stories are worth telling? And how do people get jobs where they actually maintain a position and allow their voices to be heard? But also how do we use language around the way we describe women and describe girls so that we're focusing on what their body does and how it might make them feel instead of what their body looks like and whether or not they're attracted to them.

And we've heard commentators talk like that. Or whether or not the commentator is bored and the voice of cycling [inaudible 00:07:42] said things about the women's Commonwealth Games road race in Delhi, that he was bored. And I thought to myself, it's your responsibility as a commentator to engage the audience, which happens every four years at Olympics. I mean we can even watch [inaudible 00:07:55] stream and be interested with no disrespect to the horses. But the horses are getting more newsprint than women are in this town. So a lot needs to change.

I'm really excited about the panel. We're going to talk to some four experts this afternoon. And all I can say is that the courage and the curiosity and the vigor that you all bring to your roles, I want you to maintain that. I want you to get comfortable with being uncomfortable because that's actually how we change. We challenge people, we embrace our inner nerd and we say, why is it happening this way? Why are we still doing it that way? Is that working? Do people like it? Can we be better?

One of the most brutal things about being an athlete is you get constructive or criticism every day, every movement, and yet you start to embrace it because it's how you get better. So it's hard to hear people say they don't like you or you're not doing it right or you need to be faster, you need to lose weight. But some of those actually are constructive for performance.

Ask yourselves if you're doing the best that you can in your organization and your industry. Ask yourself if your colleagues can support you more or vice versa. But also ask the people for whom you're delivering stories to and showing photographs to. And wanting to describe the performances of the amazing women and girls in this state, whether or not you're doing enough, because we're here to help you with that, but we need you. Thank you.

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**[State Government of Victoria logo]**

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